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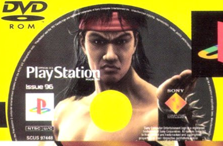

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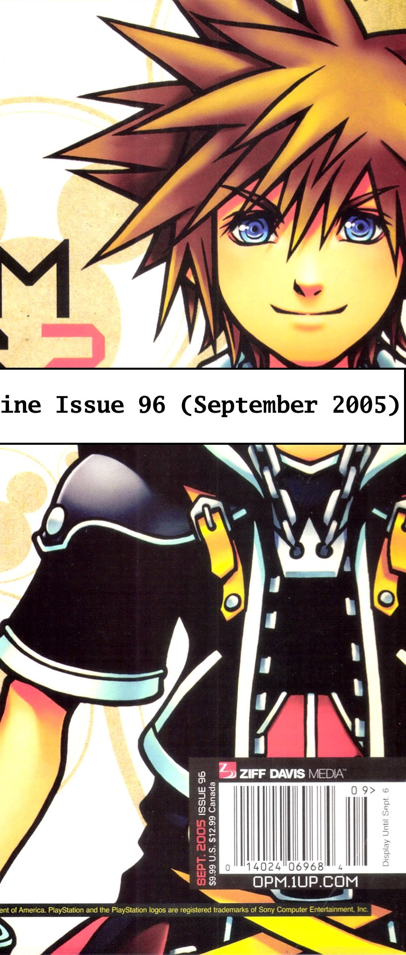

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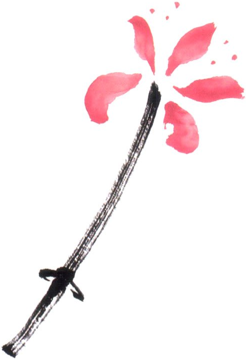

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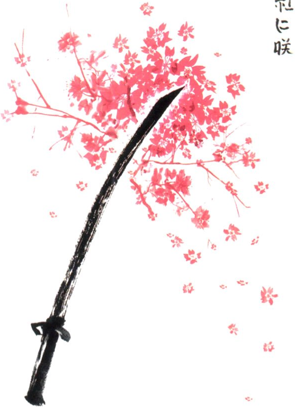

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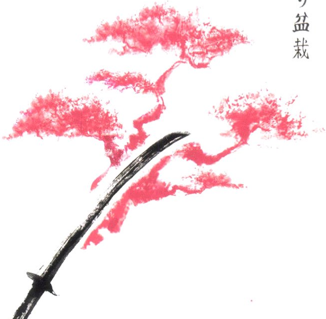

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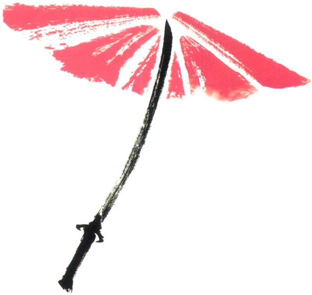

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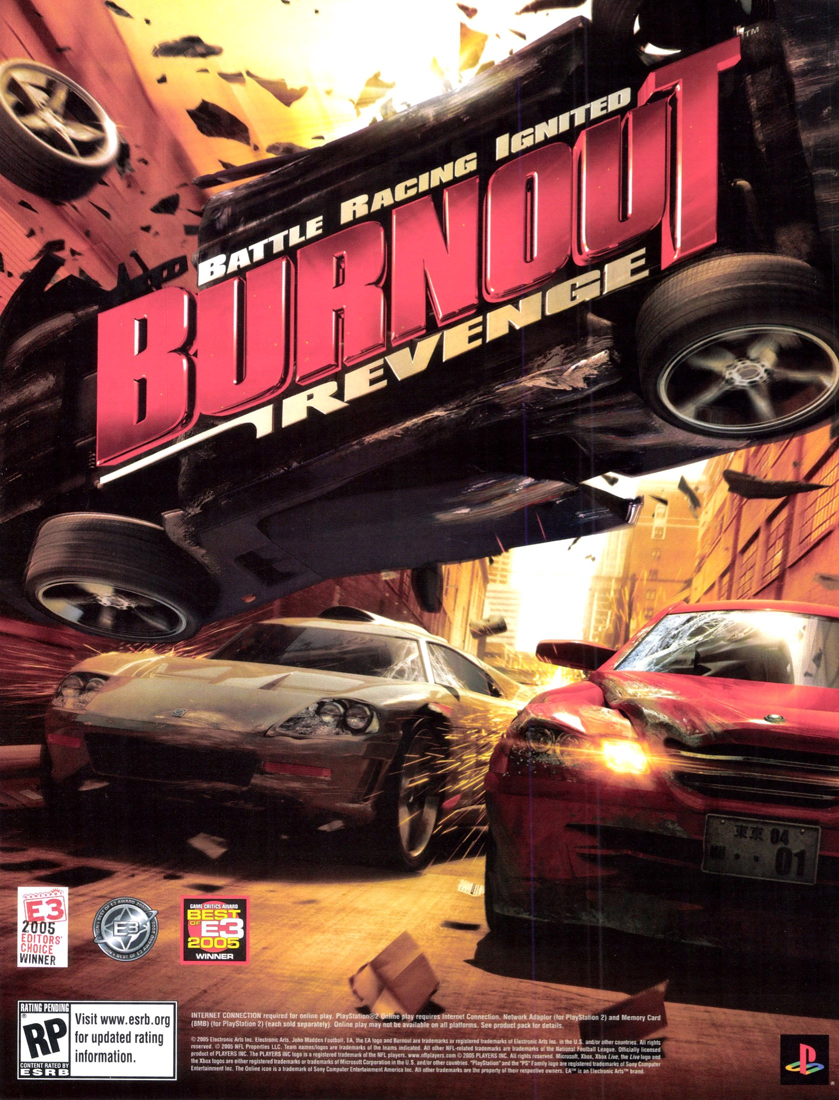
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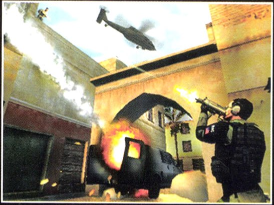

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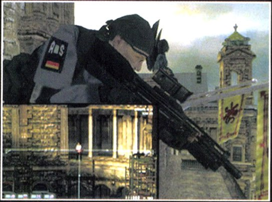

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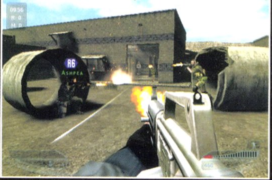

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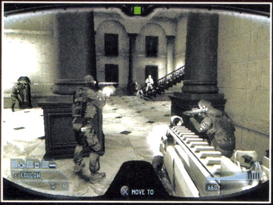

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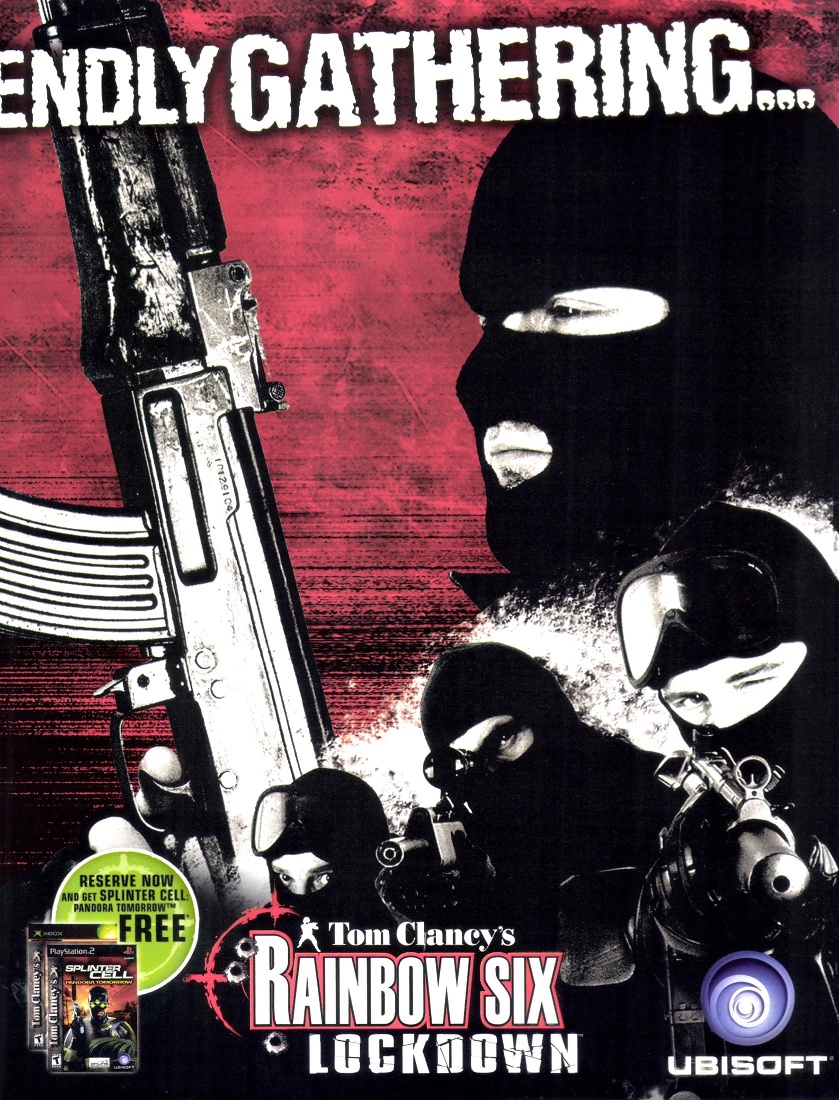
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There were a lot of darn good games.

PSONE

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, PLAYSTATION

Bake a cake and light some candles—this month marks the 10th birthday of everyone's favorite 32-bit system, the Sony PlayStation. It's hard to believe that it's been a full decade since the PS1 came along and launched Sony to the pinnacle of success. But here we are, downshifting our Emotion Engines as we cruise into the twilight days of the system's successor, making way for the PS1's Cell-powered grandchild.

PlayStation changed the way people played games—the way they thought about them, really. When Sony launched its console, the gaming industry was bogged down by expensive production, too many competing standards, and crippling uncertainty among the mind-share leaders. In just a few short years, PlayStation rose from that morass to become the undisputed champion of the era, not only taking the 32-bit prize but simultaneously paving the way for a comfortable lead in the following generation.

All in all, not bad for a slim gray box. And on the dawn of its second decade, we'd like to take a look at the system's life: where it came from, what it was, what it achieved.

REAL GAMING ROOTS

Like any good drama, the PlayStation has a lengthy and convoluted story packed with twists, betrayals, and diabolical schemes.

The PlayStation's tale begins with the creation of the Super NES. Nintendo had ruled the videogame industry with near-monopolistic control for the duration of the 8-bit era. In the latter half of the '80s, the company's name was synonymous with gaming the world over. But Sega's Genesis came along in 1989, offering great graphics and quality software, and soon the NES was looking awfully long in the tooth next to arcade-quality 16-bit blockbusters such as *Sonic the Hedgehog* and *Strider*.

Nintendo was still raking in the money with the NES but grudgingly accepted that it had to meet Sega head-on if it wanted to remain competitive. In order to create a system even more impressive than the Genesis, Nintendo focused on adding unique features to the Super NES rather than cramming raw processing power under the hood. As a result, the console's speed was half that of the Genesis', but it could perform impressive scaling, rotation, and tiling effects and display dozens of times more colors than its competition.

But perhaps the Super NES' most impressive feature was its DSP sound chip, which allowed for audio quality that represented a massive leap over the FM synthesis and wavetable noise of previous consoles. Even now, the Super NES sound chip remains the gold standard for cartridge-based consoles.

And the company that provided this musical dynamo? Sony.

Sony's gaming division was headed up by a man named Ken Kutaragi, who took an interest in the runaway success of the NES and convinced his company to enter the market. Many speculate that the DSP chip that powered the Super NES was created as a Trojan horse, with the ultimate intent of giving Sony a back door into the lucrative business of console manufacturing (not unlike what Microsoft did with the Dreamcast's Windows-based OS). Console gaming is definitely a risky business, as countless would-be Nintendo-come-latelies have learned, but the potential benefits of creating the next NES couldn't have been lost on the consumer electronics giant—especially since it was feeling the sting of having the "Walkman for games" market swiped from under its nose by Nintendo's Game Boy.

If indeed the Trojan horse theory is correct, then Kutaragi must have been gratified when Nintendo and Sony strengthened their partnership by announcing plans to create a CD-ROM add-on for the Super NES. At the time, the CD-ROM was a fairly new technology that offered a significant boost in storage space over the traditional ROM cartridges most consoles used. While CD drives were expensive, the media itself was far cheaper than cartridges. Both NEC's TurboGrafx-16 and the Genesis had their own CD peripherals on the way, and Nintendo had no interest in being left behind.

Sony would provide a CD-ROM drive that Super NES owners could attach to their existing systems, and Nintendo in turn would manufacture a combination SNES with the CD-ROM built in called Super Disc. Furthermore, Sony would have the worldwide rights to manufacture the CD-based games for the system—bad news for Nintendo, which had built its massive empire on the profits reaped from its licensing and manufacturing system. So perhaps it's not surprising that Nintendo decided to back out of its contract with Sony and, on the eve of the Super Disc's announcement, forge a new deal with European electronics giant Philips. Many speculate that this was nothing more than a game of high-stakes brinkmanship, with Nintendo merely feigning interest in Philips in order to renegotiate a more favorable deal with Sony. But if that was the case, it was a failed bluff. Sony never blinked.

The fallout wasn't pretty—Nintendo's betrayal of a Japanese company in favor of a foreign interloper was a betrayal of the nation's unspoken corporate insularity. Meanwhile, Philips' CDi was hardly a cutting-edge gaming rig, with a library mainly consisting of edutainment. Nintendo willingly licensed its precious flagship properties to tiny European development houses that promptly unleashed such gems as *The Legend of Zelda: The Wand of Gamelon* and *Hotel Mario* on unsuspecting gamers. In other words, everybody ended up a loser...except maybe Nintendo, which was able to maintain control of its precious profits.

NINTENDO HAD RULED FOR THE DURATION OF THE 8-BIT ERA.

A PLAYSTATION IS BORN

Sony, for its part, decided not to take Nintendo's double-cross lying down. It pressed ahead with plans for the Super Disc, which it renamed Play Station. The specs were largely unchanged from those drafted with Nintendo's cooperation, and Sony's console would retain the ability to play Super NES games. Meanwhile, the CDi turned out to be a horrible disappointment of a console, plans for a Philips-manufactured SNES add-on fizzled, and Nintendo still had to rely on Sony for production of the Super NES DSP.

Unsurprisingly, the two companies shook hands and made up. The result was the announcement of a mishmash monstrosity of a system, with promised support for SNES carts and both Play Station and CDi format discs. Nintendo showed off impressive tech demos for the system, including a console version of Trilobyte's cutting-edge FMV adventure *The 7th Guest*, but in the end, the delays and disputes were the undoing of the format. Sega's Genesis CD add-on had failed to make significant inroads in the market, and Nintendo decided that disc-based media was too expensive and flimsy to bank on. The Play Station died a quiet death, and numerous games planned for the system were either scrapped or scaled back. For instance, Square's *Secret of Mana* was remade as a standard Super NES game, and the creators later complained that they'd been left with a glitchy adventure suffering from obvious holes where entire portions of the game had been excised.

Nintendo forged a deal with Silicon Graphics to create an ambitious 64-bit system called Project Reality, and Philips did its best to drum up interest in the CDi (with little success). Meanwhile, Sony refused to back down. Under Kutaragi's direction, the Play Station was reimagined as a powerful 3D-capable machine with no connection to its Nintendo-oriented roots. The project was rechristened PlayStation-X and reborn as a solo Sony venture.

On May 10, 1994, Sony unveiled the final machine with its final name: PlayStation. Built around a powerful 33MHz R3000A chip, Sony claimed the system was capable of rendering 1.5 million polygons at 60 frames per second. The actual numbers were quite a bit lower in practice, but nevertheless, it was clear that PlayStation had far more polygon-pushing muscle than any of its competitors.

The system featured unique innovations. The console's front bezel housed two ports for memory cards, which allowed data for up to 15 games to be stored on an inexpensive portable card that could be transported easily and used independently of a single system or game. The back plate featured a serial I/O port that would allow two systems to be linked together, much like the Game Boy. Although few games actually supported this feature (thanks to the sheer impracticality of daisy-chaining multiple systems and televisions together), it was an interesting innovation that suggested Sony was interested in delivering an authentic arcade experience to home gamers.

The PlayStation's controllers were easily the system's most overt nod to its Super NES heritage. Despite the addition of conical handles for improved ergonomics, the PlayStation's controllers were basically Super NES controllers with a single significant difference: a second pair of shoulder triggers. Though few Super NES games had made effective use of the system's L and R buttons, Kutaragi realized that the system's emphasis on 3D gaming would require new input options and insisted on adding two more. Time would prove this to be an incredibly insightful decision. Multiplatform 3D games like *Tomb Raider* were far easier to play in their PlayStation incarnations than on other systems.

While the PlayStation's technical details were exciting in terms of sheer numbers, many gamers were skeptical. Sony was known for its consumer electronics, not its games; this was, after all, the company responsible for such atrocious games as *Hudson Hawk*, *Cliffhanger*, and *Hook*. Power is all well and good, but the numerous failed consoles of the '90s proved that processing power alone is nothing without worthwhile software.

It was something of a relief then when Sony announced that it had 164 licensees signed up to make games for the PlayStation. Ranging from the insignificant (Artdink) to the colossal (Namco, Capcom), Sony's licensees were ultimately responsible for helping to realize the full potential of the PlayStation's impressive power. More important, they denoted a level of creative support that Sony's competitors couldn't touch.

U R NOT e

When the PlayStation debuted in Japan on December 4, 1994, it didn't exactly send a seismic shock through the industry. The system certainly sold well, but Sega was determined to go toe-to-toe with the newcomer and released its 32-bit powerhouse right before Sony's launch. According to many reports, Saturn actually outsold PlayStation for the first few months, despite its higher price and less-impressive 3D performance.

Eventually, Sony's sales edged ahead, though the Saturn was never completely out of the game in Japan. However, when Sega launched its system in the United States the following summer, the Saturn arrived more or less dead in the water, thanks both to both an accelerated release date and Sega of America's dogged determination not to import many of the console's best games. PlayStation hit U.S. stores on September 9, 1995, and the system immediately topped the charts.

Sony Computer Entertainment America wasn't taking any chances with its new baby. The most impressive trick in its launch salvo was to sponsor the 1995 MTV Music Awards, bringing the system to the attention of millions upon millions of young adults—aka the target demographic. (We would be remiss if we failed to note that Microsoft shamelessly adopted a similar strategy for the Xbox 360 announcement.)

PlayStation advertising was pervasive; Sony had the money it needed to plaster the brand all over the media and the perspicacity to make the investment. The initial batch of ads stumbled somewhat—those who remember the failed system mascot that was Polygon Man have few kind words to say about him. But next to Sega's bizarre bald-headed woman and Nintendo's desperate entreaties to stick with 5-year-old technology, Sony's advertising seemed remarkably strong. And Polygon Man soon gave way to the cryptic U R Not e campaign, allowing the system to strike a comfortable balance between coolness and accessibility.

The launch wasn't without its troubles, though. The initial cost of the system—$399—was far lower than that of previous CD-driven systems like 3DO, but it was still a bit steep for gamers accustomed to shelling out $200 or less for 16-bit systems. To make matters worse, the console came without a pack-in title or memory card, meaning that to use the system, customers had to drop another $80 to $90.

SONY HAD MONEY TO PLASTER THE BRAND ALL OVER THE MEDIA.

There was also the not-so-insignificant issue of software quality. Despite the presence of a few gems (most notably *Jumping Flash* and *Ridge Racer*), the PlayStation's first-generation titles offered a lot of flash but not necessarily much in the way of gameplay. At the time, it was easy to be dazzled by endless screens of fast, colorful polygons; in retrospect, though, few of those titles have weathered the test of time.

Although the system's offerings soon improved, that first batch of games left a bitter taste in the mouths of certain gamers who were dismayed at the emphasis on visuals over gameplay. The arrival of PlayStation opened a schism in the gaming community. Fans had always drifted into opposing camps over which console was the best—Atari or Intellivision? Genesis or Super NES?—but with the move to 3D gaming there came a new rift: old versus new. Those who felt the medium was perfectly fun with old-style graphics resented the complexity and sloppiness of polygon-based games, and rumors that Sony CEA had a strict policy of forbidding 2D games did little to endear them to the PlayStation.

Despite these hiccups, the PlayStation soon rose to the top of the heap. And nothing, not even Nintendo's wildly hyped Project Reality, could dethrone it.

LEVELING THE FIELD

SONY'S WONDER CONSOLE MOWED DOWN ITS COMPETITION

The PlayStation quickly became the best-selling system of its day, but it didn't reach the pinnacle of success without a little competition. In fact, more major consoles were on the market at the time of PlayStation's debut than at any other point in gaming's history. That makes Sony's success all the more impressive. Here's a look at what the PS1 was up against.

Sega Genesis

Originally released: 1989
Strength: Great library
Weakness: 32X

The oldest viable system at the time of PlayStation's launch, the Genesis was on its last legs in 1995. The ill-conceived 32X theoretically put Genesis on even footing with PlayStation but mainly served to help Saturn launch on shaky ground.

Pippin

Originally released: 1995
Strength: Mac-based hardware
Weakness: No software

This joint venture between Apple and Bandai was built around the same hardware as the Macintosh but was actually worse for gaming. A doomed attempt to create a "set-top box," the Pippin is notable for hosting early games by Bungie (of *Halo* fame).

SUPER NINTENDO
POWER
RESET

Nintendo Super NES

Originally released: 1991
Strength: Great late-life software
Weakness: Too old to compete

Nintendo's 16-bit Goliath was entering a twilight of late-life masterpieces when PlayStation launched. The Big N kept gamers content with the likes of *Yoshi's Island* until its N64 arrived, but publishers left with a sour taste in their mouths.

SEGA SATURN
SEGA

Sega Saturn

Originally released: 1995
Strength: Great 2D performance
Weakness: Sega of America

Hampered by underpowered 3D capabilities, hamstrung by a rushed launch, and hammered for its poor software library, the Saturn did little to enchant gamers already alienated by Sega's schizophrenic 16-bit hardware release.

Panasonic
R·E·A·L
3DO INTERACTIVE MULTIPLAYER
FZ-1
Panasonic

3DO

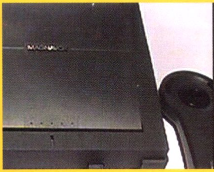
Originally released: 1993
Strength: First truly 3D console
Weakness: Far too expensive

Trip Hawkins' baby (made by Goldstar and Panasonic) was based on an innovative console licensing model that placed the burden of subsidizing the hardware cost on its licensees—who passed it along to the consumer, making for a $700 price point.

Nintendo 64

Originally released: 1996
Strength: Exceptional first-party library
Weakness: Cartridge format undermined third-party support

While impressive, the N64 didn't feel three times faster than the PlayStation, and the low capacity and high cost of its cartridge format left developers and publishers alike cold.



Philips CDi

Originally released: 1993
Strength: None
Weakness: Terrible software and high price

History has not proved kind to this overpriced edutainment device (for which Philips partnered with Magnavox); its most enduring legacy is playing host to some truly detestable *Legend of Zelda* spin-offs.

Panasonic
POWER

Matsushita M2

Originally released: N/A
Strength: Lots of hype
Weakness: Never released

Intended as a successor to the 3DO, the PowerPC-based M2 would have sported graphics abilities far surpassing those of the PS1 and N64 alike. But after sinking hundreds of millions of dollars into development, Matsushita pulled the plug.

JAGUAR CD
JAGUAR

Atari Jaguar

Originally released: 1994
Strength: Some decent software
Weakness: Too little, too late

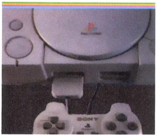
The Jaguar continued Atari's postcrash legacy of using the wrong technology at the wrong time with poor software support; a cartridge-based format and an expensive (and butt-ugly) CD-ROM add-on did nothing to net it respect.

SEGA
Dreamcast

Sega Dreamcast

Originally released: 1999
Strength: Impressive U.S. launch
Weakness: No support from Sega of Japan

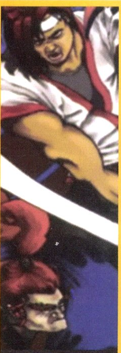
Bitterest of ironies: While the Saturn died an untimely death thanks to Sega's American management, it was the Japanese side of the company that pulled the plug on its follow-up, Dreamcast.



DEFINITIVE HALF-DOZEN

SIX GAMES THAT DEFINED THE PLAYSTATION

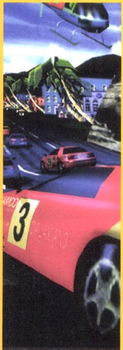
The PlayStation is host to an enormous amount of software, possibly the most of any console ever manufactured. With thousands of unique titles available worldwide, it even puts the NES and Game Boy libraries to shame. But these six games in particular stand out as pivotal representatives of what the PlayStation was about—the definitive half-dozen that turned Sony's question mark of a system into a must-have machine.



BATTLE ARENA TOSHINDEN

Tamsoft/Sony, 1995

It's little dated these days—OK, we'll be honest: It looks and plays horribly. But 10 years ago, *Toshinden* was pants-wettingly cutting edge and perfectly summed up everything the PlayStation wanted to be. More accessible than *Virtua Fighter*, fresher than *Street Fighter*, this was the game that people bought their PlayStations for.



RIDGE RACER

Namco, 1995

Ridge Racer impressed every bit as much as *Toshinden*, but for other reasons. Namely, it was the most incredible arcade-to-home port ever seen. Every car, every blistering turn, and every rockin' tune made it to the home version and demonstrated that Sony's sleek gray box had far more power than any of its competitors. The downside: The loading times were so bad that Namco added a miniature version of *Galaxian* to appease restless gamers while data was being streamed from the disc. Welcome to the CD-ROM era!

RESIDENT EVIL

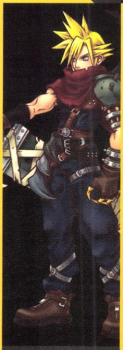
Capcom, 1996

Admittedly a straight-up rip-off of the PC adventure series *Alone in the Dark* (all the way down to the polygonal characters in static environments), *Resident Evil* was the first great example of Sony's commitment to quality, adult-oriented entertainment. Sure, the controls sucked, and the voice acting was worse. But for all intents and purposes, this was the game that helped the PS1 grab gamers by the throat, chew on their jugulars, and gnaw on their brains.

TOMB RAIDER

Core/Eidos, 1996

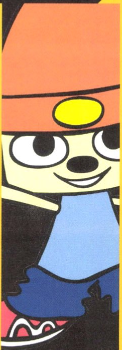
Although Eidos published *Tomb Raider* on PC and Saturn, it was the PlayStation version that made Lara Croft a star—and gave the system its first mascot. (No, Polygon Man doesn't count.) The announcement that Lara's sequels would be PlayStation exclusives was a major coup for Sony; it was the ammo the system needed to fight off N64's stiff *Mario* competition.



FINAL FANTASY VII

Square/Sony, 1997

Not only was *FFVII* a major blockbuster that sold systems with its amazing graphics, and not only did it finally convince Americans that RPGs and anime were pretty OK after all, but it also signaled an important sea change in the industry. *Final Fantasy* had always been the exclusive provenance of Nintendo—in fact, an early real-time demo of *FFVI* characters offered a glimpse of what the N64 would be capable of. But in jumping ship to PlayStation, Square was sending a clear signal: Sony's console, not Nintendo's, was the vehicle of choice for creative expression.



PARAPPA THE RAPPER

Sony, 1997

Parappa further cemented the underlying message delivered by *FFVII*. Although it was the furthest thing from Square's flashy epic, it was quirky and original, and it beautifully fused video, music, and gameplay into a cohesive, hilarious whole. *Parappa* was a game that could exist only on CD-ROM, and only Sony was willing to publish something so innovative. Plus, its $40 budget price was carefully calculated to make Nintendo's $70 cartridges look even more like fossils.

THE NEW REGIME

Sony's domination was a surprise to most people; even those who expected the PlayStation to be a success were caught off guard by just how successful it ultimately was. Steadily, methodically, the pieces fell into place to put the system ahead of the pack.

PlayStation's dominance was abetted by many factors, not least of which was Sony's willingness to leverage the advantages of the CD format. Cartridges had always been expensive, and as ROM sizes increased over the years, so did prices; the NES launched with most software falling in the $20 to $30 range, but each new wave of must-have software came with a higher price tag. By the time the PlayStation arrived, games such as *Chrono Trigger* and *Phantasy Star IV* sometimes ran as high as $100.

Sony initially followed the industry standard, asking the typical $60 for its games—but the company soon realized that it could break that standard and remain profitable. As PlayStation sales moved into the million-units-plus range, SCEA lowered the price of games to $50. In 1997, Sony introduced a "budget" line of games priced at $40. Sega followed suit. Nintendo, on the other hand, launched Project Reality (aka Nintendo 64) in 1996, doggedly clinging to the cartridge format. Whether this decision was motivated by the high profit margins of cartridges, the fear of piracy, or simply a desire to thumb its nose at Sony, it was universally regarded as a poor one. N64 software offered less content for more cost, a crucial weakness in the console that was supposed to trounce PlayStation.

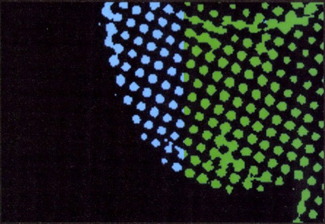
It wasn't just gamers who balked at the high cost of N64 games; the format's limited storage capacity and expensive production requirements scared away most third-party developers as well. Many publishers (including Capcom and Acclaim) had taken a serious financial hit when they overproduced 16-bit carts, and few were eager to stick their necks out again. Sony offered a much safer business model, a high installed base, and a growing brand name. PlayStation became synonymous with gaming, just as Nintendo had been 10 years before.

The system's position was strengthened by a rash of developer and publisher defections that went hand-in-hand with the publishing model—a major sign that everything that was going wrong in Nintendo's camp was going right for Sony. While Nintendo focused on its "Dream Team" of developers, Sony courted any and all comers. The first and most dramatic defection came in 1996 when RPG giant Square announced it would be bringing its *Final Fantasy* series (and, in fact, all its games) exclusively to PlayStation. Enix soon followed suit with its *Dragon Quest* franchise. This effectively sealed the N64's fate in Japan: The two developers responsible for the country's most popular games had abandoned the company that had turned them into giants.

Things weren't any rosier on the Saturn side, either; the system found itself starved for content as Sega methodically alienated loyal publishers like Working Designs. Slowly, inevitably third-party support for the N64 and Saturn dwindled as the PlayStation library burst at the seams with fantastic exclusive content.

Significantly, PlayStation marked the first time since the Atari 2600 era that Western developers and publishers were as vital a force as Japanese creators. British developer Psygnosis was absorbed into the Sony corporation and created *Wipeout*, a blistering futuristic racer that did for PlayStation what *F-Zero* had done for Super NES. Incog's *Twisted Metal*, Gremlin's *Loaded*, Insomniac's *Spyro the Dragon*, Eidetic's *Syphon Filter*—all were top-notch original creations that helped make the system a best-seller, and all were designed in Europe or America. Western developers even dabbled in console genres that had always been dominated by Eastern companies. For instance, when Japanese-developed RPGs were slow to trickle overseas, Crystal Dynamics filled the void with the superb *Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain*.

Kain was significant as more than just an attempt to reclaim the RPG genre from Japan; it also signified one of the first attempts to make effective use of the ESRB's Mature rating. "Mature" software in the 16-bit era was generally blood-soaked comic-book nonsense along the lines of *Primal Rage* and *Mortal Kombat*. But developers found that Sony's relaxed content policies offered them the freedom to truly explore adult themes. *Legacy of Kain*, for instance, told the story of a man who had been cursed with vampirism and set out for revenge against his tormentors. Players were forced to decide whether it was worth slaughtering innocents in order to maintain their antihero's health.



NINTENDO SOFTWARE OFFERED LESS CONTENT FOR MORE MONEY.

The change in content was a welcome nod to the fact that PlayStation appealed to an older crowd than its predecessors had. While the competition continued to play to its usual audience of teens (and younger), Sony recognized that people who were teens (and younger) when they bought an NES or Genesis were becoming adults who still enjoyed gaming. By targeting these adult gamers, the PlayStation was able to expand its market beyond its built-in demographic.

There was no shortage of pandering, of course. Eidos was among the worst offenders, turning the minor lesbian subtext of *Fear Effect 2: Retro Helix* into the centerpiece of its ad campaign, for instance. But on the whole, Sony's efforts helped push the medium further into the mainstream, creating a bigger market not only for itself, but for everyone in the business.

By the time the PlayStation's successor launched in October 2000, Sony had made its console into a giant whose life was further extended by the compact PSone unit and the PS2's backward compatibility. The system's final U.S. release arrived last fall (in the form of EA's *FIFA Soccer 2005*), meaning that all told, the PlayStation lasted nine years on the market. That puts it on par with the NES and Atari 2600, which in turn were only surpassed by SNK's NeoGeo (which has always proven to be the exception to a lot of rules).

So what hath the PlayStation wrought? It's perfectly reasonable to say that Sony's sleek little 32-bit machine was responsible for bringing the gaming industry back from the brink of self-destruction. By making the medium accessible, affordable, and appealing again, PlayStation helped make videogames into the multibillion-dollar industry it is today.

As gamers brace themselves for a new hardware generation, it's easy to speculate about what will happen in the next few years. Will PlayStation 3 continue Sony's winning streak? Will Xbox 360 pull ahead? Will Nintendo survive? Whatever happens, we wouldn't be where we are today without the help of the original PlayStation. Happy birthday, little guy. « *Jeremy Parish*

REVIEW ARCHIVE

Game names in black bars indicate a Greatest Hits title. Names in red indicate a score of 5 out of 5. The ⚡ symbol indicates the game supports online play.

GAME	PUBLISHER	SCORE	ISSUE
PSP			
Ape Escape: On the Loose	Sony CEA	●●●	93
Archer Maclean's Mercury	Ignition	●●●◖	94
ATV Offroad Fury: Blazin' Trails	Sony CEA	●●●	94
Coded Arms	Konami	●●	95
Darkstalkers Chronicle: TCT	Capcom	●●●	93
Dynasty Warriors	Koei	●●●	92
FIFA Soccer	EA Sports	●●●●	94
Gretzky NHL	Sony CEA	●●●◖	93
Hot Shots Golf: Open Tee	Sony CEA	●●●●	95
Lumines	Ubisoft	●●●●	92
Metal Gear Acid	Konami	●●●●	92
MLB	Sony CEA	●●●◖	94
MVP Baseball	EA Sports	●●●	95
NBA	Sony CEA	●●◖	93
NBA Street Showdown	EA Sports Big	●●●	94
Need for Speed Underground Rivals	EA Games	●●●◖	92
NFL Street 2: Unleashed	EA Sports Big	●●●	93
Rengoku: The Tower of Purgatory	Konami	●	93
Ridge Racer	Namco	●●●●◖	92
Smart Bomb	Eidos	●◖	93
Spider-Man 2	Activision	●●●◖	93
Tiger Woods PGA Tour	EA Sports	●●●●	93
Tony Hawk's Underground 2: Remix	Activision	●●●●	93
Twisted Metal: Head-On	Sony CEA	●●●●	93
Untold Legends: Brotherhood...	Sony Online	●●●	92
Wipeout Pure	Sony CEA	●●●●	93
World Tour Soccer	Sony CEA	●●●	93
PS2			
.hack//INFECTION	Bandai	●●●◖	65
.hack//MUTATION	Bandai	●●●●	69
.hack//OUTBREAK	Bandai	●●●●	73
.hack//QUARANTINE	Bandai	●●●●	76
18 Wheeler American Pro Trucker	Acclaim	●●●●	52
4x4 EVO	GOD Games	●●●●	44
2002 FIFA World Cup	EA Sports	●●●●	58
Ace Combat 04: Shattered Skies	**Namco**	**●●●●◖**	**51**
Ace Combat 5: The Unsung War	Namco	●●●●	87
Activision Anthology	Activision	●●●●	64
Aero Elite: Combat Academy	Sega	●●●	67
The Adventures of Cookie & Cream	Agetec	●●●◖	44
Aggressive Inline	Acclaim	●●●●◖	59
Airblade	Namco	●●●●	53
Airforce Delta Strike	Konami	●●●	78
Alias	Acclaim	●●◖	81
Alien Hominid	0-3 Entertainment	●●●●	88
Aliens Versus Predator: Extinction	EA Games	●●●◖	72
All-Star Baseball 2002	Acclaim	●●●◖	44
All-Star Baseball 2003	Acclaim	●●●◖	56
All-Star Baseball 2004	Acclaim	●●●	67
⚡All-Star Baseball 2005	Acclaim	●●◖	80
Alter Echo	THQ	●●	73
American Idol	Codemasters	●	77
⚡Amplitude	Sony CEA	●●●●	68
Antz Extreme Racing	Empire	●◖	61
Ape Escape 2	Ubisoft	●●●●◖	70
Ape Escape: Primed & Pumped	Ubisoft	●●◖	88
Aqua Aqua	3DO	●●	42
Arc the Lad: End of Darkness	Namco	●●	95
Arc the Lad: Twilight of the Spirits	Sony CEA	●●●●	70
Arctic Thunder	Midway	●	50
⚡Area 51	Midway	●●●●	90
Armored Core 2	Agetec	●●●	39
Armored Core 2: Another Age	Agetec	●●●◖	48
Armored Core 3	Agetec	●●●◖	61
Armored Core: Nexus	Agetec	●●	85
Army Men: Air Attack	3DO	●●●◖	44
Army Men: Green Rogue	3DO	●●	45
Army Men RTS	3DO	●●●●	56
Army Men: Sarge's Heroes 2	3DO	●●◖	45
Asterix & Obelix Kick Buttix	Atari	●●◖	85
Astro Boy	Sega	●●●	85
Atari Anthology	Atari	●●	89
Atelier Iris: Eternal Mana	NIS America	●●●◖	94
Athens 2004	Sony CEA	●●◖	83
ATV Offroad Fury	**Sony CEA**	**●●●●**	**42**
⚡ATV Offroad Fury 2	**Sony CEA**	**●●●●**	**64**
⚡ATV Offroad Fury 3	Sony CEA	●●●●	88
ATV Quad Power Racing 2	Acclaim	●●●●	66
⚡Auto Modellista	Capcom	●●◖	69
Backyard Baseball	Atari	●●◖	81
Backyard Wrestling: Don't Try This at Home	Eidos	●●◖	75
Backyard Wrestling 2: There Goes the Neighborhood	Eidos	●◖	89
Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance	**Interplay**	**●●●●◖**	**52**
Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance II	Interplay	●●●◖	77
Barbarian	Titus	●●	57
The Bard's Tale	Vivendi Universal	●●●●◖	86
Bass Strike Virtual Fishing Tournament	THQ	●◖	51
Batman: Rise of Sin Tzu	Ubisoft	●●	74
Batman: Vengeance	Ubisoft	●●●	51
Battle Assault 3	Bandai	●●◖	88
Battle Engine Aquila	Atari	●●●◖	65
Battlestar Galactica	Vivendi Universal	●●●	76
Beyond Good & Evil	Ubisoft	●●●●	75
Big Mutha Truckers	Empire	●●●	71
Bionicle: The Game	EA Games	●●◖	75
Black & Bruised	Majesco	●●●●	67
Blade II	Activision	●●	62
Blood Omen 2	Eidos	●●●◖	57
BloodRayne	Majesco	●●●◖	63
BloodRayne 2	Majesco	●●●●◖	87
Blood Will Tell	Sega	●●●●	87
Bloody Roar 3	Activision	●●●◖	47
Bloody Roar 4	Konami	●	75
Blowout	Majesco	●●●	77
BMX XXX	Acclaim	●◖	65
Bombastic	Capcom	●●◖	72
Breath of Fire: Dragon Quarter	Capcom	●●●●	67
Britney's Dance Beat	THQ	●●●●	58
⚡Brothers in Arms: Road to Hill 30	Ubisoft	●●●	92
The Bouncer	Square EA	●●●	42
Buffy the Vampire Slayer: CB	Sierra/Fox	●●●◖	73
Bujingai: The Forsaken City	Bam	●●●●	82
Burnout	Acclaim	●●●●◖	52
Burnout 2: Point of Impact	Acclaim	●●●●	63
⚡Burnout 3: Takedown	**EA Games**	**●●●●●**	**85**
Butt-Ugly Martians: Zoom or Doom!	Crave	●●	73
Cabela's Big Game Hunter	**Activision**	**●●◖**	**67**
Cabela's Big Game Hunter 2005 Adv.	Activision	●●●	90
Cabela's Dangerous Hunts	**Activision**	**●●◖**	**76**
Cabela's Deer Hunt 2004 Season	Activision	●●◖	74
Cabela's Deer Hunt 2005 Season	Activision	●●●●◖	85
⚡Call of Duty: Finest Hour	Activision	●●●●	89
Capcom Fighting Evolution	Capcom	●◖	88
Capcom vs. SNK 2	Capcom	●●●●◖	51
Carmen Sandiego: The Secret of the Stolen Drums	Bam	●●◖	77
CART Fury	Midway	●	47
Casper: Spirit Dimensions	TDK Mediactive	●●◖	50
Castlevania: Lament of Innocence	Konami	●●●●	74
The Cat in the Hat	Vivendi Universal	●●	76
Catwoman	EA Games	●	84
⚡Champions of Norrath: Realms of EverQuest	**Sony Online**	**●●●●◖**	**78**
⚡Champions: Return to Arms	Sony Online	●●●●◖	90
Chaos Legion	Capcom	●●●◖	70
⚡Chessmaster	Ubisoft	●●●◖	70
Choplifter: Crisis Shield	Xicat	●●●	69
ChoroQ	Atlus	●●●◖	86
City Crisis	Take-Two	●●●	48
Clock Tower 3	Capcom	●●●	68
Cold Fear	Ubisoft	●●●	92
Cold Winter	Vivendi Universal	●●●◖	93
Colin McRae Rally 3	**Codemasters**	**●●●●●**	**68**
Colosseum: Road to Freedom	Koei	●●◖	95
Combat Elite: WWII Paratroopers	Acclaim	●●●	83
Commandos 2: Men of Courage	Eidos	●●	62
Conflict: Desert Storm	**Gotham Games**	**●◖**	**63**
Conflict: Desert Storm II	Gotham Games	●●●	74
Conflict: Vietnam	Global Star	●●◖	86
Conflict Zone	Ubisoft	●●◖	63
Constantine	THQ	●●●	92
Contra: Shattered Soldier	Konami	●●●●◖	64
Corvette	Global Star	●●●◖	81
Cool Boarders 2001	Sony CEA	●●●●	46
Crash Bandicoot: Wrath of Cortex	**Universal**	**●●●◖**	**51**
⚡Crash 'N' Burn	Eidos	●●	87
Crash Nitro Kart	**Vivendi Universal**	**●●●◖**	**76**
Crash Twinsanity	Vivendi Universal	●●◖	86
Crazy Taxi	**Acclaim**	**●●●●**	**46**
Crimson Sea 2	Koei	●●●◖	80
Crimson Tears	Capcom	●●●◖	83
Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon	Ubisoft	●●	74
Culdcept	SNK	●●●◖	75
Dark Angel: Vampire Apocalypse	Metro3D	●◖	49
Dark Cloud	**Sony CEA**	**●●●●◖**	**46**
Dark Cloud 2	**Sony CEA**	**●●●●●**	**66**
Dark Summit	THQ	●●●◖	52
Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX 2	**Acclaim**	**●●●◖**	**50**
DDR Extreme	Konami	●●●●	85
DDRMAX	Konami	●●●●	63
DDRMAX 2	Konami	●●●●	74
Dead or Alive 2: Hardcore	Tecmo	●●●●◖	39
Dead to Rights	**Namco**	**●●●**	**65**
Dead to Rights II	Namco	●●	94
Death by Degrees	Namco	●◖	90
Def Jam Vendetta	**EA Sports Big**	**●●●●**	**67**
Def Jam Fight for NY	EA Games	●●●●◖	85
Defender	Midway	●●●◖	62
Destroy All Humans!	THQ	●●●	95
⚡Destruction Derby Arenas	Gathering	●●◖	80
Deus Ex: The Conspiracy	Eidos	●●●●◖	56
Devil May Cry	**Capcom**	**●●●●●**	**50**
Devil May Cry 2	**Capcom**	**●●●**	**66**
Devil May Cry 3: Dante's Awakening	Capcom	●●●●◖	91
Digimon Rumble Arena 2	Bandai	●●●	88
Digimon World 4	Bandai	●●	94
Digital Hitz Factory	XS Games	●●●●	76
Dino Stalker	Capcom	●●●◖	61
Disaster Report	Agetec	●●●◖	65
Disgaea: Hour of Darkness	Atlus	●●●●	72
Disney Golf	EA Games	●●●●	61
Disney's Extreme Skate Adventure	Activision	●●●●	73
Disney's PK: Out of the Shadows	Ubisoft	●●◖	63
Disney's Treasure Planet	Sony CEA	●●●◖	64
A Dog's Life	Hip Interactive	●●	84
Donald Duck: Goin' Quackers	Ubisoft	●●●◖	42
Downforce	Titus	●●	57
Downhill Domination	Sony CEA	●●●●	71
Dr. Muto	Midway	●●◖	63
Dragon Ball Z: Budokai	**Atari**	**●●●◖**	**65**
Dragon Ball Z: Budokai 2	**Atari**	**●●◖**	**76**
Dragon Ball Z: Budokai 3	Atari	●●●●	88
Dragon Ball Z: Sagas	Atari	●●◖	93
Dragon Rage	3DO	●◖	54
Drakan: The Ancients' Gates	Sony CEA	●●●●	53
Drakengard	Square Enix USA	●●	78
DRIV3R	Atari	●●●◖	83
Driven	Bam	●	52
Driving Emotion Type-S	Square EA	●●◖	41
Drome Racers	EA Games	●●◖	64
Dropship	Bam	●●●●	57
Dual Hearts	Atlus	●●●	61
Duel Masters	Atari	●●●	89
The Dukes of Hazzard: Return of the General Lee	Ubisoft	●●●◖	87
Dynasty Tactics	Koei	●●●●◖	61

REAL-TIME SCARCITY

Due to the difficulty of coming up with a decent console control scheme, real-time strategies have never made it big on consoles. That said, *Army Men RTS*—from *Mercenaries* developer Pandemic—is easily one of the best.

HATE THE SINGER, NOT THE GAME

Say what you will about the subject, the gameplay of *Britney's Dance Beat* is actually pretty damn good. It's one of the few deviations from the falling-arrows *DDR* style of rhythm games, and that's something to be proud of.

GAME	PUBLISHER	SCORE	ISSUE
Dynasty Tactics 2	Koei	●●●●	74
Dynasty Warriors 2	Koei	●●●●	38
Dynasty Warriors 3	Koei	●●●●	52
Dynasty Warriors 3: Xtreme Legends	Koei	●●●◖	65
Dynasty Warriors 4	**Koei**	●●●●	**85**
Dynasty Warriors 4: Empires	Koei	●●●●◖	68
Dynasty Warriors 4: Xtreme Legends	Koei	●●●◖	75
Dynasty Warriors 5	Koei	●●●◖	92
Ecco the Dolphin: Defender of the Future	Acclaim	●●◖	56
Echo Night: Beyond	Agetec	●●●	84
Egg Mania: Eggstreme Madness	Kemco	●●◖	61
⚡eJay Clubworld	Crave	●●	73
Endgame	Empire	●●	59
Enter the Matrix	**Atari**	●●●	**71**
Enthusia Professional Racing	Konami	●●◖	93
Ephemeral Fantasia	Konami	●◖	49
Escape From Monkey Island	**LucasArts**	●●●●●	**46**
⚡ESPN College Hoops	ESPN Videogames	●●●◖	76
⚡ESPN College Hoops 2K5	ESPN Videogames	●●●◖	88
ESPN International Track & Field	Konami	●●●	39
ESPN International Winter Sports 2002	Konami	●●●●	54
⚡ESPN Major League Baseball	ESPN Videogames	●●●◖	80
ESPN MLS Extra Time	Konami	●●	44
ESPN National Hockey Night	Konami	●◖	45
ESPN NBA 2Night	Konami	●●	42
ESPN NBA 2Night 2002	Konami	●●●	56
⚡ESPN NBA 2K5	ESPN Videogames	●●●●	87
⚡ESPN NBA Basketball	**ESPN Videogames**	●●●●●	**75**
⚡ESPN NFL Football	ESPN Videogames	●●●●◖	72
⚡ESPN NFL 2K5	ESPN Videogames	●●●●	84
⚡ESPN NHL Hockey	ESPN Videogames	●●●●◖	73
⚡ESPN NHL 2K5	ESPN Videogames	●●●●◖	85
ESPN Winter X Games Snowboarding	Konami	●●●	41
ESPN Winter X Games Snowboarding 2002	Konami	●●●	53
ESPN X Games Skateboarding	Konami	●●●●	49
Eternal Ring	Agetec	●●	38
Eve of Extinction	Eidos	●●◖	56
Everblue 2	Capcom	●●●	66
Evergrace	Agetec	●●	39
⚡EverQuest Online Adventures	Sony Online	●●◖	66
⚡EverQuest Online Adventures: Frontiers	Sony Online	●●●◖	77
Evil Dead: A Fistful of Boomstick	THQ	●●●	70
Evil Twin	Ubisoft	●●	52
Evolution Skateboarding	Konami	●●◖	63
Evolution Snowboarding	Konami	●	65
Extermination	Sony CEA	●●◖	48
Extreme-G III	Acclaim	●●●●	50
EyeToy: AntiGrav	Sony CEA	●●●●◖	87
EyeToy: Groove	Sony CEA	●●●●◖	80
F1 2001	**EA Sports**	●●●●●	**52**
F1 2002	EA Sports	●●●●◖	60
F1 Career Challenge	**EA Sports**	●●●●●	**71**
F1 Championship	Ubisoft	●●●●	43
F1 Championship Season 2000	EA Sports	●●◖	41
Fairly OddParents: Shadow Showdown	THQ	●●●◖	88
Fallout: Brotherhood of Steel	Interplay	●●◖	78
Fantavision	Sony CEA	●●●●	40
Fatal Frame	Tecmo	●●●●	55
Fatal Frame 2: Crimson Butterfly	Tecmo	●●●●	77
Ferrari F355 Challenge	Sega	●●	61
FIFA 2001 Major League Soccer	EA Sports	●●●●◖	39
FIFA 2002	EA Sports	●●●●◖	51
FIFA Soccer 2003	**EA Sports**	●●●●●	**63**
⚡FIFA Soccer 2004	**EA Sports**	●●●●●	**75**
⚡FIFA Soccer 2005	**EA Sports**	●●●●●	**86**
⚡FIFA Street	EA Sports	●●◖	91
Fight Club	Vivendi Universal	●◖	87
⚡Fight Night 2004	**EA Sports**	●●●●	**80**
⚡Fight Night Round 2	EA Sports	●●●●◖	91
Fighter Maker 2	Agetec	●◖	64
Final Fantasy X	**Square EA**	●●●●●	**53**
Final Fantasy X-2	**Square Enix USA**	●●●●●	**75**
⚡Final Fantasy XI	**Square Enix USA**	●●●●●	**78**
⚡Final Fantasy XI: Chains of Promathia	Square Enix USA	●●●●	87
Finding Nemo	**THQ**	●●●◖	**71**

BLAST FROM THE PAST

Eternal Ring was one of the very first PS2 games we reviewed. It's a very, very slow-paced RPG with graphics that looked amazing at the time. And now? Well, let's just say that the game hasn't really held up all that well....

GAME	PUBLISHER	SCORE	ISSUE
Finny the Fish and the Seven Waters	Natsume	●●	91
Fireblade	Midway	●●◖	59
Fisherman's Challenge	Konami	●●	67
FlatOut	Empire Interactive	●●◖	95
Flipnic: Ultimate Pinball	Capcom	●●●	95
Ford Racing 2	Gotham Games	●●◖	76
Ford Racing 3	2K Games	●●●	94
Forever Kingdom	Agetec	●◖	53
Forgotten Realms: Demon Stone	Atari	●●●◖	86
Formula One 2001	Sony CEA	●●◖	50
Freaky Flyers	Midway	●●●◖	72
Freedom Fighters	**EA Games**	●●●●●	**73**
Freekstyle	**EA Sports Big**	●●●●	**59**
Freestyle Metal X	Midway	●●●	71
Frequency	Sony CEA	●●●◖	52
Frogger: The Great Quest	Konami	●◖	53
Frogger's Adventure: The Rescue	Konami	●●◖	76
Front Mission 4	Square Enix	●●●●	82
Fugitive Hunter	Encore	●	76
⚡Full Spectrum Warrior	THQ	●●●●	93
Fullmetal Alchemist	Square Enix	●●●	89
Fur Fighters: Viggo's Revenge	Acclaim	●●●	46
Futurama	Vivendi Universal	●●◖	72
Future Tactics: The Uprising	Crave	●●●◖	81
G1 Jockey 3	Koei	●●●◖	69
Gadget Racers	Conspiracy	●●●◖	50
Galactic Wrestling Featuring Ultimate Muscle	Bandai	●●◖	82
Galerians: Ash	Sammy	●◖	66
Gallop Racer	Tecmo	●●	48
Gallop Racer 2003: A New Breed	Tecmo	●●●	69
Gallop Racer 2004	Tecmo	●●●●	85
Gauntlet: Dark Legacy	Midway	●●●◖	46
The Getaway	**Sony CEA**	●●●●	**66**
The Getaway: Black Monday	Sony CEA	●●	89
Get on da Mic	Eidos	●●	87
Ghosthunter	Namco	●●◖	84
Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex	Bandai	●●	87
⚡Ghost Recon 2	Ubisoft	●●●	89
Giants: Citizen Kabuto	Interplay	●●●◖	51
Gitaroo-Man	Koei	●●●◖	53
Gladiator: Sword of Vengeance	Acclaim	●●	75
Gladius	LucasArts	●●●●	74
Goblin Commander: Unleash the Horde	Jaleco	●●◖	76
God of War	**Sony CEA**	●●●●●	**92**
GoDai: Elemental Force	3DO	●◖	54
Godzilla: Save the Earth	Atari	●●◖	88
⚡GoldenEye: Rogue Agent	EA Games	●●●	89
Gradius III and IV	Konami	●●◖	39
Gradius V	Konami	●●●◖	85
Graffiti Kingdom	Hot-B	●●●●	93
Gran Turismo 3: A-spec	**Sony CEA**	●●●●●	**46**
Gran Turismo 4	**Sony CEA**	●●●●●	**91**
Grand Prix Challenge	Atari	●●●◖	68
Grand Theft Auto III	**Rockstar**	●●●●●	**52**
Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas	**Rockstar**	●●●●●	**87**
Grand Theft Auto: Vice City	**Rockstar**	●●●●●	**63**
Grandia II	Ubisoft	●●●◖	53
Grandia Xtreme	Enix	●●●◖	62
Gravity Games Bike: Street, Vert, Dirt	Midway	◖	61
The Great Escape	Gotham Games	●●●◖	72
⚡Gretzky NHL 2005	Sony CEA	●●◖	88
⚡Growlanser Generations	Working Designs	●●●●	88
GTC Africa	Majesco	●●◖	58
Guilty Gear Isuka	Sammy	●●●●	86
Guilty Gear X	Majesco/Sammy	●●●●	51
Guilty Gear X2	Sammy	●●●●	66
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Gungrave: Overdose	Mastiff	●●●◖	86
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The Guy Game	Gathering	●	85
Half-Life	**Sierra**	●●●●●	**51**
Harry Potter: Quidditch World Cup	**EA Games**	●●●	**75**
Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone	EA Games	●◖	76
Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets	**EA Games**	●●●◖	**64**
Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban	EA Games	●●●●	82

GAME	PUBLISHER	SCORE	ISSUE
Harvest Moon: Save the Homeland	Natsume	●●●●	51
Haunted Mansion	TDK	●●●	77
Haunting Ground	Capcom	●●◖	93
Haven: Call of the King	Midway	●●●◖	64
Headhunter	Acclaim	●●●	57
Headhunter: Redemption	Sega	●●●	86
Herdy Gerdy	Eidos	●●●	56
Heroes of Might and Magic	3DO	●●◖	46
Hidden Invasion	Conspiracy	●●●	60
High Heat MLB 2002	3DO	●●●●	44
High Heat MLB 2003	3DO	●●●●◖	55
High Heat MLB 2004	**3DO**	●●●●●	**67**
Hitman: Contracts	Eidos	●●●●◖	81
Hitman 2: Silent Assassin	**Eidos**	●●●●◖	**63**
The Hobbit	Vivendi Universal	●●●◖	76
Hot Shots Golf 3	**Sony CEA**	●●●●	**55**
⚡Hot Shots Golf Fore!	Sony CEA	●●●◖	85
⚡Hot Wheels: Stunt Track Challenge	THQ	●●●◖	89
Hot Wheels: Velocity X	THQ	●●◖	64
The Hulk	**Vivendi Universal**	●●●●	**70**
Hunter: The Reckoning–Wayward	Interplay	●●◖	72
Hypersonic Xtreme	Majesco	●●◖	67
I-Ninja	Namco	●●●◖	75
Ico	**Sony CEA**	●●●●●	**50**
In the Groove	RedOctane	●●●◖	94
The Incredibles	THQ	●●●◖	88
Indiana Jones and the Emperor's Tomb	LucasArts	●●●	71
Indy Car Series	Codemasters	●●●	71
Intellivision Lives!	Crave	●●●◖	77
Inuyasha: The Secret of the Cursed Mask	Bandai	●	89
Island Extreme Stunts	EA Games	●●●◖	65
The Italian Job	Eidos	●●	72
Jade Cocoon 2	Ubisoft	●●●◖	53
Jak and Daxter: The Precursor Legacy	**Sony CEA**	●●●●●	**52**
Jak II	**Sony CEA**	●●●◖	**74**
Jak 3	Sony CEA	●●●●◖	87
James Bond 007: Agent Under Fire	**EA Games**	●●●●	**52**
James Bond 007: Everything or Nothing	**EA Games**	●●●●◖	**79**
James Bond 007: NightFire	**EA Games**	●●●●◖	**64**
James Cameron's Dark Angel	Sierra	●●	65
Jeopardy!	Atari	●●◖	77
Jeremy McGrath Supercross World	Acclaim	●	53
Jet X20	Sony CEA	●●	63
Jimmy Neutron: Attack of the Twonkies	THQ	●●●	88
Jonny Moseley Mad Trix	3DO	●◖	54
Judge Dredd: Dredd vs. Death	Evolved Games	●●◖	80
Juiced	THQ	●●●◖	94
The Jungle Book: Rhythm n' Groove	Ubisoft	●●●	69
Jurassic Park: Op. Genesis	Universal Int.	●●●●◖	68
K-1 World Grand Prix	Konami	●●	71
Karaoke Revolution	Konami	●●●●	75
Karaoke Revolution Volume 2	Konami	●●●●◖	83
Karaoke Revolution Volume 3	Konami	●●●●◖	87
Katamari Damacy	Namco	●●●●◖	86
Kelly Slater's Pro Surfer	Activision	●●●◖	61
Kengo: Master of Bushido	Crave	●●●	42
Kessen	EA Games	●●●	39
Kessen II	Koei	●●●	51
Kessen III	Koei	●●●	91
kill.switch	Namco	●●●●◖	75
Killer 7	Capcom	●●◖	95
⚡Killzone	Sony CEA	●●●●	87
Kinetica	Sony CEA	●●●●◖	50
King Arthur	Konami	●	88
King of Fighters 2000/2001	SNK Playmore	●●◖	76
King of Fighters 2002/2003	SNK Playmore	●●●●	88
King of Fighters: Maximum Impact	SNK Playmore	●●●	87
The King of Route 66	Sega	●●●	67
King's Field: The Ancient City	Agetec	●●	55
Kingdom Hearts	**Square EA**	●●●●◖	**61**
Klonoa 2: Lunatea's Veil	Namco	●●●●◖	47
Knockout Kings 2001	EA Sports	●●●●	42
Knockout Kings 2002	EA Sports	●●●●	55
Kuon	Agetec	●●◖	87
Kya: Dark Lineage	Atari	●●◖	76

VIDEOGAME

PLAYSTATION'S TOUGHEST, CRAZIEST, EVILEST

ROUND 1

TOMMY VERCETTI
Vice City's antihero did 15 years in a Liberty City prison for homicide.

VS.

CARL JOHNSON
Drive-bys, drug deals, and armed robbery are all in a *San Andreas* day's work.

WINNER TOMMY VERCETTI

CJ cares too much about his family to reach Vercetti's level of depravity. Plus the gimp suit....

JACK SLATE
His salty language and '80s-action-hero 'tude endear *Dead to Rights*' star to 12-year-olds around the world—a couple at least.

VS.

MAX PAYNE
The hard-boiled originator of "bullet time" knows how to handle a gun.

WINNER JACK SLATE

In the battle for generic douche bag supremacy, bad taste must prevail.

LIU BEI
Thousands upon thousands of mindless soldiers have fallen under the sword of this dynasty warrior.

VS.

KING OF ALL COSMOS
The effeminate god of *Katamari Damacy* destroyed every star in the universe while on a drunken rampage.

WINNER KING OF ALL COSMOS

Ordered every man, woman, child, mariachi band, and Godzilla on earth rolled into a giant ball.

BATMAN
Packs a mean crotch punch in the *Batman Begins* game.

VS.

HOMER SIMPSON
Impervious to Taser shocks, nuclear waste, gunshots, cannon balls, and relentless head trauma.

WINNER HOMER SIMPSON

Batman's obsession with justice loses to Homer's bottomless selfishness.

JAWS
Great white sharks are known to swallow 30 pounds of flesh in a single bite.

VS.

MR. MOSQUITO
You may not have played Mr. M.'s self-titled game, but his real-life counterparts spread malaria and West Nile virus, diseases that kill thousands every year.

WINNER JAWS

While his actual kill count pales, Jaws strikes fear into the hearts of millions.

HOMINID
Looks cartoon cute in *Alien Hominid* but often bites the heads off his enemies.

VS.

SHADOW THE HEDGEHOG
Sonic knows how to make a buck: Goth dye-job and a newfound fondness for guns.

WINNER HOMINID

Too punk rock for 3D.

TY THE TASMANIAN TIGER
Onscreen, Ty is kid-friendly fare. Offscreen, his famous L.A. parties often end in overdose and gunfire.

VS.

RAZ
Sorts out the mentally insane characters of *Psychonauts* by diving into their minds.

WINNER TY THE TASMANIAN TIGER

Raz never stood a chance against the Tasmanian Terror, who reportedly assaulted Crash Bandicoot at a charity event last year.

BAM MARGERA
This *Tony Hawk* alumnus is famous for humiliating his parents on national television.

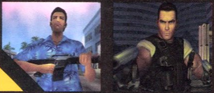
VS.

'93 HONDA CIVIC SI
Ruthlessly slams into opponents to keep up momentum in *Gran Turismo*.

WINNER '93 HONDA CIVIC SI

The Civic gets better mileage than Margera's tired routine.

ROUND 2



Tommy Vercetti vs. Jack Slate

WINNER TOMMY VERCETTI

Tommy doesn't like nosy cops. He dumps the body off a pier and heads for the closest Pay 'N' Spray.

King of All Cosmos vs. Homer Simpson

WINNER KING OF ALL COSMOS

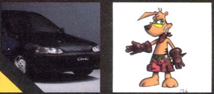
In the competitive-eating portion of our contest, the King easily laid to waste his human (if gluttonous) adversary.

Hominid vs. Jaws

WINNER JAWS

Wins on sheer number of teeth, which are retractable, like cat claws.

ROUND 2



'93 Honda Civic Si vs. Ty the Tasmanian Tiger

WINNER TY THE TASMANIAN TIGER

Ty had a car—till his license was permanently revoked by a third-strike DUI.

ROUND 3

Tommy Vercetti vs. King of All Cosmos

WINNER TOMMY VERCETTI

Sure, you could use your in-game freedom to roll a bunch of novelty items into a ball, or you could pick off pedestrians with a sniper riffle until the tanks show up.

Ty the Tasmanian Tiger vs. Jaws

WINNER TY THE TASMANIAN TIGER

Rumored to have kicked heroin with a full blood transfusion from a Peruvian boy (whose parents were paid handsomely for their sacrifice).

ROUND 4

Tommy Vercetti vs. Ty the Tasmanian Tiger

WINNER TOMMY VERCETTI

Vercetti knows Ty's type, coked out and bleeding money, desperate for attention. Ty signed away his own image rights by the end of the night.

FIN

James Earl Cash vs. Tommy Vercetti

WINNER TOMMY VERCETTI

Cash does what his director tells him to, but Vercetti takes orders from nobody—except the players who steer him through crime sprees and heists, driving, looting, and shooting Vercetti's way into videogame infamy.

INFAMY

CHARACTERS DUKE IT OUT

by Robert Ashley

ROUND 1

BARRY BONDS
Responded to infidelity scandal by dragging his teenage son to press conferences.

VS.

MARCUS HILL
Ingested ecstasy, cocaine, amphetamine, LSD, and marijuana—but still couldn't make *NARC* fun.

WINNER BARRY BONDS ■
He does real drugs. Allegedly.

ALUCARD
Being the son of Dracula in *Castlevania: Symphony of the Night* has to count for something.

VS.

DANTE
Genetically, he's half devil (*May Cry*). But in terms of sex appeal, he's all man.

WINNER DANTE ■
His hair is (slightly) less wussy than Alucard's long golden locks.

OLD REVOLVER OCELOT
This Russian John Wayne sports an intimidating Yosemite Sam mustache in *Metal Gear Solid*.

VS.

YOUNG REVOLVER OCELOT
Holy time paradox! *MGS3* showcased a younger, mewling, mustacheless Ocelot who was still plenty capable of kicking ass.

WINNER OLD REVOLVER OCELOT ■
A handlebar and some experience will get you far.

THE PRINCE
Copped a surly attitude and a penchant for decapitation after the poor sales of *Sands of Time*.

VS.

KRATOS
Look at *God of War*'s cover. Those blades-on-chains things? Fused to his arms.

WINNER KRATOS ■
Begins his game by committing suicide.

ANAKIN SKYWALKER
This grumpy teenager killed a room full of adorable little Jedi in *Episode III*.

VS.

SEPHIROTH
This grumpy teenager burned an entire village full of innocents to the ground in *Final Fantasy VII*.

WINNER SEPHIROTH ■
Didn't have those embarrassingly bad scenes with Natalie Portman (aka Preggo Padme).

SUB-ZERO
Known for ripping both head and spinal column from the bodies of his *Mortal Kombat* foes.

VS.

TRAVIS BICKLE
"You talkin' to me? You talkin' to me?" *Taxi Driver*'s Travis is the archetype of psycho badass.

WINNER SUB-ZERO ■
Mortal Kombat outraged several senators around election season.

SWEET TOOTH
Serial killer, dresses like a clown, drives *Twisted Metal*'s ice-cream truck, forever cursed with flaming scalp.

VS.

JAMES EARL CASH
Spends the duration of *Manhunt* performing grizzly murders for snuff films.

WINNER JAMES EARL CASH ■
Faces Piggsy, a chain-saw-wielding psychopath who wears the skin and head of a pig.

AGENT 47
This cue-ball-headed hitman kills 'em dead in his snazzy suit.

VS.

HARMAN SMITH
Killer 7's wheelchair-bound assassin has seven psychotic personalities.

WINNER HARMAN SMITH ■
Smith's commitment to teamwork beats 47's lone-wolf approach.

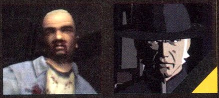
ROUND 2

Barry Bonds vs. Dante
WINNER DANTE
There are serious doubts as to how Bonds would fend off the minions of hell armed only with a baseball bat.

Kratos vs. Revolver Ocelot
WINNER REVOLVER OCELOT
You don't bring a knife to a gunfight. Plus, Ocelot doesn't have any frat-boy tribal tattoos...or that Starbucks barista goatee.

Sub-Zero vs. Sephiroth
WINNER SEPHIROTH
Not as closely associated with bad techno music or those crappy *Mortal Kombat* games.

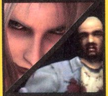
ROUND 2



James Earl Cash vs. Harman Smith
WINNER JAMES EARL CASH
Manhunt's grainy video style feels more evil than *Killer 7*'s cel shading. Playing *Manhunt* feels more evil than anyone is comfortable with.

ROUND 3

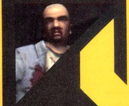
Revolver Ocelot vs. Dante
WINNER
REVOLVER OCELOT
Less likely to listen to Depeche Mode.



Sephiroth vs. James Earl Cash
WINNER JAMES EARL CASH
Summon spells vs. gruesome stealth kills.

ROUND 4

Revolver Ocelot vs. James Earl Cash
WINNER JAMES EARL CASH
Germany, Australia, and New Zealand banned *Manhunt* outright.



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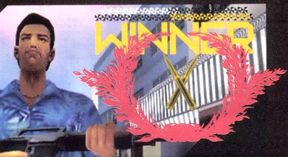

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Don't worry: Even though there aren't many games for your PSP out right now, that doesn't mean you need to turn it into a doorstop. To find out PSP uses that don't require gaming software, come on over.

PS2.1UP.COM
If you don't agree with *OPM*'s take on your favorite PS2 game, then see if *EGM* and 1UP agreed with us or if we are just plain ol' crazy.

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Sometimes you wanna go where everybody knows your name, and they're always glad you came. You wanna be where you can see troubles are all the same.

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Clubs can spawn wondrous things. The Mickey Mouse Club gave us Britney Spears, Justin Timberlake, and Christina Aguilera. Wait a second, maybe they're not so wondrous....

PS1-DERLAND

THERE'S SOMETHING IN THE AIR

GAMERS ARE READY FOR A CHANGE. IS SONY?

JEREMY PARISH

When he's not trying to reclaim his vanished youth with obsolete games, Jeremy works as 1UP.com's features editor and charming mascot. Check out his blog at toastyfrog.1UP.com.

Ten years ago—September 9, 1995, to be exact—the PlayStation debuted in America and transformed a kids' hobby into something adults could enjoy unselfconsciously.

This year also marks the 20th anniversary of Nintendo's stealthy resuscitation of the U.S. gaming industry with its innocuous gray box known as the NES. Oh, and *Home Pong* (which created the home gaming industry) is celebrating its 30th anniversary as well.

Revolutions, at least in this medium, seem to come once a decade. Of course, there's a bit of fudgery with those numbers; the NES actually debuted in Japan in 1983, and the PlayStation launched there in December 1994. Particulars aside, the point is that gaming undergoes a seismic shift once every 10 years.

1975. 1985. 1995. Brace yourselves: It's 2005.

Which new console will be the harbinger of change? The obvious answer would be the Xbox 360—due by year's end, Microsoft's next system will squeak in just under the 10-year-cycle wire.

Then again, maybe it's not so obvious. Few of the Xbox 360 titles demoed at E3 made gamers stand back and take notice. In fact, the games mostly looked like shinier Xbox fare. At E3, Capcom's Keiji Inafune gushed about how the 360 offers developers unlimited potential to put new ideas into action. Then he unveiled *Dead Rising*...a typical melee combat game whose only apparent nod to that "unlimited" potential was a single scene with hundreds of zombies shuffling around at once. Not exactly the stuff of which the future is made.

But wait—2005 has already seen a console debut in the PSP. Sony has put into gamers' hands a system that offers most of the perks of the Game Boy, but with better graphics and built-in media-playback capabilities. The system's janky design quirks need a little refinement, and software support for the near future is a thin dribble of racing games and console ports, but the system itself is something genuinely new. The next generation of consoles, on the other hand, looms like more of the same, only with prettier-looking games. Remember to buy an HDTV to get the full benefit! Oh, and now there's "pay as you play"—seems our wallets will be the first against the wall with this revolution.

Looking back, gaming's previous landmarks have been about content, not graphics. NES gave developers the palette they needed to create console adventures with the depth of a PC RPG; *Zelda*, *Dragon Quest*, and *Metroid* could never have been made before the NES. With the PS1, Sony marketed its system to an older audience than typically played console games. More importantly, the company gave developers the freedom to create games with themes appropriate for their new audience.

The PSP is first and foremost a game system—one with the ability to lure adults to a gaming space that lately has been dominated by *Pokémon*-flavored fare geared toward the 8-to-10-year-old set. PSP has the ingredients to do to portable gaming what the PS1 did to consoles—all that's missing is the software. Given the hype around PSP, gamers are clearly ready for a change. The question is: Is Sony? «

GAME	PUBLISHER	SCORE	ISSUE
La Pucelle: Tactics	Mastiff	●●●●	81
Le Mans 24 Hours	Infogrames	●●◖	48
Legacy of Kain: Defiance	Eidos	●●◖	76
Legaia 2: Duel Saga	Fresh Games	●●●	63
The Legend of Alon D'ar	Ubisoft	●◖	54
Legends of Wrestling	Acclaim	●●◖	53
Legends of Wrestling II	Acclaim	●●●	65
Legion: The Legend of Excalibur	Midway	●●●	59
Lego Racers 2	Lego Media	●●◖	51
Lego Star Wars	Giant Int.	●●●●	92
Leisure Suit Larry: Magna Cum Laude	Vivendi Universal	●●◖	87
Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events	Activision	●●	89
Lethal Skies	Sammy	●●●	58
Lethal Skies II	Sammy	●●●◖	74
Looney Tunes: Back in Action	EA Games	●	76
The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring	Black Label	●●●◖	63
⚡The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King	**EA Games**	**●●●●●**	**75**
The Lord of the Rings: The Third Age	EA Games	●●	88
The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers	**EA Games**	**●●●●◖**	**63**
Lowrider	Jaleco	●◖	77
Lupin the 3rd: Treasure of the Sorcerer King	Bandai	●●●◖	78
Mace Griffin Bounty Hunter	Vivendi Universal	●●	71
Mad Maestro!	Eidos/Fresh	●●●	56
Madden NFL 2001	EA Sports	●●●●◖	38
Madden NFL 2002	EA Sports	●●●●◖	48
⚡Madden NFL 2003	**EA Sports**	**●●●●●**	**60**
⚡Madden NFL 2004	**EA Sports**	**●●●●●**	**72**
⚡Madden NFL 2005	EA Sports	●●●●◖	83
Mafia	Gathering	●●●◖	79
Magic Pengel: The Quest for Color	Agetec	●●●●	69
⚡Major League Baseball 2K5	2K Games	●●●●	91
Malice	Mud Duck	●●◖	84

I DON'T CARE IF I NEVER GET BACK

Ever wanted to punch a baserunner square in the junk? You can! And you can do it in videogames, too! Check out any of the *MLB SlugFest* games for some fist-swinging, hard-hitting action. You can even charge the mound after getting beaned.

GAME	PUBLISHER	SCORE	ISSUE
Manhunt	**Rockstar**	**●●●◖**	**76**
The Mark of Kri	Sony CEA	●●●	59
Marvel vs. Capcom 2	Capcom	●●●●	61
Mat Hoffman's Pro BMX 2	Activision	●●●●	60
Max Payne	**Rockstar**	**●●●●**	**53**
Max Payne 2: The Fall of Max Payne	Rockstar	●●●◖	77
Maximo: Ghosts to Glory	**Capcom**	**●●●◖**	**54**
Maximo vs. Army of Zin	Capcom	●●●●	77
McFarlane's Evil Prophecy	Konami	◖	84
MDK2 Armageddon	Interplay	●●●◖	45
Medal of Honor: European Assault	EA Games	●●●●	95
Medal of Honor: Frontline	**EA Games**	**●●●●●**	**58**
⚡Medal of Honor: Rising Sun	**EA Games**	**●●●◖**	**76**
Mega Man Anniversary Collection	Capcom	●●●◖	83
Mega Man X: Command Mission	Capcom	●●●◖	86
Mega Man X7	Capcom	●●●◖	74
Mega Man X8	Capcom	●●●	88
Men in Black II: Alien Escape	Infogrames	●●◖	60
Mercenaries	LucasArts	●●●●◖	89
Metal Arms: Glitch in the System	Vivendi Universal	●●●●	75
Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty	**Konami**	**●●●●●**	**51**
Metal Gear Solid 2: Substance	**Konami**	**●●●●●**	**67**
Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater	**Konami**	**●●●●●**	**88**
Metropolismania	Natsume	●●●	61
Midnight Club	**Rockstar**	**●●●●**	**39**
⚡Midnight Club II	**Rockstar**	**●●●●●**	**67**
⚡Midnight Club 3: DUB Edition	Rockstar	●●●●	93
Midway Arcade Treasures	Midway	●●●◖	76
Midway Arcade Treasures 2	Midway	●●●●	87
Mike Tyson Heavyweight Boxing	Codemasters	●	58
Minority Report	Activision	●●◖	65
Mission: Impossible–Operation Surma	Atari	●●	77

GAME	PUBLISHER	SCORE	ISSUE
Mister Mosquito	Eidos/Fresh	●●●◖	56
MLB 2004	Sony CEA	●●●	67
⚡MLB 2005	Sony CEA	●●●◖	80
⚡MLB 2006	Sony CEA	●●●◖	91
MLB SlugFest 20-03	Midway	●●●●	59
MLB SlugFest 20-04	Midway	●●●●	67
⚡MLB SlugFest: Loaded	Midway	●●●◖	83
Mobile Light Force 2	XS Games	●●●◖	69
Mobile Suit Gundam: Encounters in Space	Bandai	●	75
Mobile Suit Gundam: Federation vs. Zeon	Bandai	●●●◖	61
Mobile Suit Gundam: Journey to Jaburo	Bandai	●	48
Mobile Suit Gundam: Zeonic Front	Bandai	●●●	54
Mojo!	Crave	●●◖	73
Monopoly Party	Infogrames	●●●	65
Monster 4x4: Masters of Metal	Ubisoft	●●◖	77
Monster Hunter	Capcom	●●●●	86
Monster Rancher 3	Tecmo	●●●●	50
Monster Rancher 4	Tecmo	●●●◖	75
Monsters, Inc.	Sony CEA	●●●◖	55
Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance	**Midway**	**●●●●**	**64**
⚡Mortal Kombat: Deception	Midway	●●●●	87
MotoGP	Namco	●●●●	39
MotoGP 2	Namco	●●●●◖	53
MotoGP 3	Namco	●●●●◖	67
Motor Mayhem	Infogrames	●●●	47
MTV Music Generator 2	Codemasters	●●●	46
MTV Music Generator 3: This Is the Remix	Codemasters	●●●◖	82
MTV's Celebrity Deathmatch	Gotham Games	●◖	76
⚡MTX: Mototrax	Activision	●●◖	80
The Mummy Returns	Universal	●◖	52
Musashi Samurai Legend	Square Enix	●●●	91
Music Maker	Magix	●●●●	69

GAME	PUBLISHER	SCORE	ISSUE
MVP Baseball 2003	EA Sports	●●●◖	67
⚡MVP Baseball 2004	EA Sports	●●●●◖	80
⚡MVP Baseball 2005	EA Sports	●●●●◖	91
MX 2002 Featuring Ricky Carmichael	THQ	●●●●	47
MX Rider	Infogrames	●●●◖	52
MX Superfly Featuring Ricky Carmichael	THQ	●●●◖	59
⚡MX vs. ATV Unleashed	THQ	●●●●	91
⚡My Street	Sony CEA	●●●	67
Myst III: Exile	Ubisoft	●●●◖	63
Mystic Heroes	Koei	●●◖	64
MX Unleashed	**THQ**	**●●●**	**79**
Namco Museum	**Namco**	**●●●◖**	**53**
Nano Breaker	Konami	●●◖	90
NARC	Midway	◖	93
NASCAR 2001	EA Sports	●●◖	40
⚡NASCAR 2005: Chase for the Cup	**EA Sports**	**●●●●●**	**85**
NASCAR Heat	Infogrames	●●●●	47
NASCAR Thunder 2002	EA Sports	●●●●◖	51
NASCAR Thunder 2003	**EA Sports**	**●●●●◖**	**62**
⚡NASCAR Thunder 2004	**EA Sports**	**●●●●●**	**73**
NASCAR: Dirt to Daytona	Infogrames	●●●◖	63
Naval Ops: Warship Gunner	Koei	●●●	71
NBA 2K2	**Sega Sports**	**●●●●●**	**53**
⚡NBA 2K3	**Sega Sports**	**●●●●●**	**63**
NBA Ballers	**Midway Sports**	**●●●●**	**80**
NBA Hoopz	Midway	●●●	44
NBA Jam 2004	Acclaim	●●◖	75
NBA Live 2001	EA Sports	●●●	42
NBA Live 2002	EA Sports	●●◖	51
⚡NBA Live 2003	EA Sports	●●●●	63
⚡NBA Live 2004	EA Sports	●●●●◖	75
⚡NBA Live 2005	EA Sports	●●●●	86
NBA ShootOut 2001	Sony CEA	●●◖	44
NBA ShootOut 2003	Sony CEA	●●●	63
⚡NBA ShootOut 2004	Sony CEA	●●●	75
NBA Starting Five	Konami	●●◖	63
NBA Street	**EA Sports Big**	**●●●●●**	**47**
NBA Street Vol. 2	**EA Sports Big**	**●●●●●**	**68**
⚡NBA Street V3	EA Sports Big	●●●●◖	90
⚡NCAA College Basketball 2K3	Sega Sports	●●●●	64
NCAA College Football 2K3	Sega Sports	●●◖	60
NCAA Final Four 2001	Sony CEA	●	41
NCAA Final Four 2002	Sony CEA	●◖	52
NCAA Final Four 2003	Sony CEA	●●◖	64
⚡NCAA Final Four 2004	Sony CEA	●●	76
NCAA Football 2002	EA Sports	●●●●◖	48
NCAA Football 2003	**EA Sports**	**●●●●●**	**60**
⚡NCAA Football 2004	**EA Sports**	**●●●●●**	**71**
⚡NCAA Football 2005	EA Sports	●●●●◖	83
⚡NCAA Football 06	Konami	●●	95
NCAA GameBreaker 2001	Sony CEA	●◖	41
NCAA GameBreaker 2003	Sony CEA	●●	61
⚡NCAA GameBreaker 2004	Sony CEA	●●◖	73
NCAA March Madness 2002	EA Sports	●●●	53
NCAA March Madness 2003	EA Sports	●●●	64
⚡NCAA March Madness 2004	EA Sports	●●●●	76
⚡NCAA March Madness 2005	EA Sports	●●●◖	88
Need for Speed: Hot Pursuit 2	**EA Games**	**●●●●●**	**62**
⚡Need for Speed Underground	**EA Games**	**●●●●◖**	**76**
⚡Need for Speed Underground 2	**EA Games**	**●●●●●**	**87**
Neo Contra	Konami	●●●◖	87
NFL 2K2	**Sega Sports**	**●●●◖**	**52**
⚡NFL 2K3	Sega Sports	●●●●◖	60
NFL Blitz 20-02	Midway	●●●●	55
NFL Blitz 20-03	Midway	●●●◖	60
⚡NFL Blitz Pro	Midway Sports	●●●	74
NFL GameDay 2001	Sony CEA	●	40
NFL GameDay 2002	Sony CEA	●◖	53
⚡NFL GameDay 2003	Sony CEA	●●◖	61
⚡NFL GameDay 2004	Sony CEA	●●●	73
NFL Quarterback Club 2001	Acclaim	●●◖	50
⚡NFL Street	**EA Sports Big**	**●●●●◖**	**78**
⚡NFL Street 2	EA Sports Big	●●●◖	89
NHL 2001	EA Sports	●●●●	38
NHL 2002	EA Sports	●●●●◖	50

SURPRISING ADEQUACY

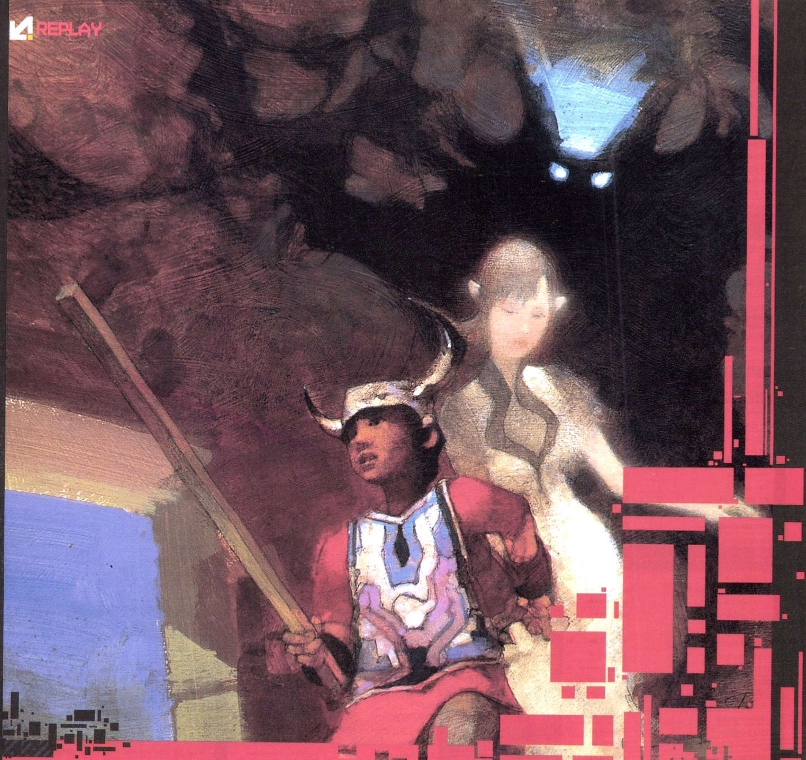
Pretty much everyone expected *Pirates: The Legend of Black Kat* to suck. So imagine our surprise when it turned out to be a not-half-bad adventure game with fun naval battles!

RED DEAD 2?

At Sony's E3 press conference, the montage of PS3 game footage included an unnamed, Old West–looking demo from Rockstar. Could this be a sequel to the surprisingly good *Red Dead Revolver*? Rockstar, being Rockstar, ain't talking.

GAME	PUBLISHER	SCORE	ISSUE
NHL 2003	EA Sports	●●●◖	63
⚡NHL 2004	EA Sports	●●●●	73
⚡NHL 2005	EA Sports	●●●◖	85
NHL 2K3	**Sega Sports**	**●●●●●**	**64**
NHL FaceOff 2001	Sony CEA	●●●◖	43
NHL FaceOff 2003	Sony CEA	●●	64
NHL Hitz 20-02	Midway	●●●●	51
NHL Hitz 20-03	Midway	●●●●◖	62
⚡NHL Hitz Pro	Midway	●●●●	73
Nick Toons: Movin'	THQ	●●●	88
Nightmare of Druaga	Namco	●●	87
Ninja Assault	Namco	●●◖	61
No One Lives Forever	Sierra	●●●◖	56
Obscure	DreamCatcher	●●	93
Okage: Shadow King	Sony CEA	●●●	51
Oni	Rockstar	●◖	43
Onimusha: Warlords	**Capcom**	**●●●●**	**43**
Onimusha 2: Samurai's Destiny	Capcom	●●●●	60
Onimusha 3: Demon Siege	Capcom	●●●●◖	81
Orphen: Scion of Sorcery	Activision	●●●	39
⚡Outlaw Golf 2	Global Star	●◖	88
Pac-Man Fever	Namco	●●	60
Pac-Man World 2	**Namco**	**●●●●◖**	**54**
PaRappa the Rapper 2	Sony CEA	●●●◖	53
Paris-Dakar Rally	Acclaim	●●	53
Phantom Brave	NIS America	●●●●◖	85
Pinball Hall of Fame	Crave	●◖	90
Pirates: The Legend of Black Kat	EA Games	●●●◖	55
Pitfall: The Lost Expedition	Activision	●●	80
Playboy: The Mansion	Arush Ent.	●●	91
The Polar Express	THQ	●●●	88
Pool Paradise	Ignition	●●●◖	83
Portal Runner	3DO	●●	50
Power Drome	Mud Duck	●	84
Power Rangers: Dino Thunder	THQ	●●	88
The Powerpuff Girls: Relish Rampage	Bam	●●	65
Predator: Concrete Jungle	Vivendi Universal	●●◖	94
Pride FC	THQ	●●●●	65
Primal	Sony CEA	●●●●	68
Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time	**Ubisoft**	**●●●●●**	**75**
Prince of Persia: Warrior Within	Ubisoft	●●●●	88
Pro Race Driver	Codemasters	●●●●◖	65
Project Eden	Eidos	●●●◖	52
⚡Project: Snowblind	Eidos	●●●●	91
Pryzm Chapter One: The Dark Unicorn	TDK Mediactive	●●◖	60
Psi-Ops: The Mindgate Conspiracy	Midway	●●●●◖	82
Psychonauts	Majesco	●●●●	95
P.T.O. IV	Koei	●●●	66
The Punisher	THQ	●●●◖	90
Q-Ball Billiards Master	Take-Two	●●●◖	40
Quake III: Revolution	EA Games	●●●●◖	44
R: Racing Evolution	Namco	●●●●	76
R-Type Final	Eidos/Fresh Games	●●●●	78
Rally Fusion: Race of Champions	Activision	●●●	64
Rapala Pro Fishing	Activision	●●◖	85
Ratchet & Clank	**Sony CEA**	**●●●●●**	**63**
Ratchet & Clank: Going Commando	**Sony CEA**	**●●●●●**	**75**
⚡Ratchet & Clank: Up Your Arsenal	**Sony CEA**	**●●●●●**	**87**
Rayman 2: Revolution	**Ubisoft**	**●●●●●**	**41**
Rayman 3: Hoodlum Havoc	Ubisoft	●●●◖	67
Rayman Arena	Ubisoft	●●●◖	57
RC Revenge Pro	Acclaim	●●◖	41
Ready 2 Rumble Boxing Round 2	Midway	●●●●	40
Real Pool	Infogrames	●●●◖	40
Red Card Soccer 20-03	Midway	●●●	57
Red Dead Revolver	Rockstar	●●●●	82
Red Faction	**THQ**	**●●●●●**	**46**
Red Faction II	THQ	●●●●	63
Red Ninja: End of Honor	Vivendi Universal	●●	92
Reel Fishing III	Natsume	●●●●	72
Reign of Fire	Bam	●●●◖	63
Resident Evil Code: Veronica X	**Capcom**	**●●●●◖**	**48**
Resident Evil: Dead Aim	Capcom	●●●◖	70
⚡Resident Evil Outbreak	Capcom	●●●◖	81
⚡Resident Evil Outbreak: File #2	Capcom	●◖	92

GAME	PUBLISHER	SCORE	ISSUE
Return to Castle Wolfenstein: OR	Activision	●●●◖	71
Rez	Sega	●●●●◖	53
Ribbit King	Bandai	●●●	82
Ridge Racer V	Namco	●●●●◖	38
Riding Spirits	Bam	●●●◖	61
Ring of Red	Konami	●●●●	43
Rise of the Kasai	Sony CEA	●●●◖	92
Rise to Honor	**Sony CEA**	**●●●**	**78**
⚡Risk: Global Domination	Atari	●●●●	73
RLH: Run Like Hell	Interplay	●●●	62
Road Kill	Midway	●●●●	74
Road Trip	Conspiracy	●●●●	61
Robin Hood: Defender of the Crown	Capcom	●●◖	74
Robotech: Invasion	Global Star	●●●	86
Robots	Vivendi Universal	●	92
Rocky	Ubisoft	●●●●	64
Rocky Legends	Ubisoft	●●◖	87
Robot Alchemic Drive	Enix	●●●●	63
Robotech: Battlecry	TDK	●●●◖	62
Rogue Ops	Kemco	●●◖	75
Romance of the Three Kingdoms VII	Koei	●●◖	60
Romance of the Three Kingdoms VIII	Koei	●●●	73
Romance of the Three Kingdoms X	Koei	●●●◖	94
RPG Maker 2	Agetec	●●●◖	74
RTX Red Rock	LucasArts	●●	71
Rugby	EA Sports	●●●◖	48
Rugby 2004	EA Sports	●●●	73
Rugby 2005	EA Sports	●●◖	91
Rumble Racing	EA Games	●●●●◖	45
Rumble Roses	Konami	●●●	88
Rune: Viking Warlord	Take-Two	●●◖	48
Rygar: The Legendary Adventure	Tecmo	●●●●◖	64
Salt Lake 2002	Eidos	●●◖	55
Samurai Jack: The Shadow of Aku	Sega	●●●●	80
Samurai Warriors	Koei/EA	●●●●	81
Samurai Warriors: Xtreme Legends	Koei	●●●	88
Samurai Western	Atlus	●●●	94
Saturday Night Speedway	Atari	●●◖	81
Savage Skies	Bam	●●●	56
Scaler	Global Star	●●●●	88
Scooby-Doo! Mystery Mayhem	THQ	●●●	81
Scooby-Doo! Night of 100 Frights	**THQ**	**●●●**	**58**
The Scorpion King: Rise of the Akkadian	Universal	●●	62
SD Gundam Force: Showdown!	Bandai	●●●◖	88
Second Sight	Codemasters	●●●●	86
Secret Weapons Over Normandy	LucasArts	●●●●	75
Seek and Destroy	Conspiracy	●●●◖	66
Sega Bass Fishing Duel	Sega	●●●	62
Sega Classics Collection	Sega	●●	90
Sega Soccer Slam	Sega Sports	●●	62
Sega Sports Tennis	Sega Sports	●●●●◖	60
Sega Superstars	Sega	●●●●	88
⚡Serious Sam: Next Encounter	Global Star	●●●◖	81
Seven Samurai 20XX	Sammy	●●	80
Shadow Hearts	Midway	●●●●	52
Shadow Hearts: Covenant	Midway	●●●●	86
Shadow of Destiny	Konami	●●●◖	43
Shadow of Rome	Capcom	●●●●	89
Shadow Man: 2econd Coming	Acclaim	●●	57
Shaman King: Power of Spirit	Konami	●●◖	89
Shark Tale	Activision	●●◖	88
Shaun Palmer's Pro Snowboarder	Activision	●●◖	52
ShellShock: Nam '67	Eidos	●●	85
Shifters	3DO	●	58
Shin Megami Tensei: Digital Devil Saga	Atlus	●●●●	92
Shin Megami Tensei: Nocturne	Atlus	●●●●◖	86
Shining Tears	Sega	●●●	90
Shinobi	Sega	●●●◖	63
Showdown: Legends of Wrestling	Acclaim	●◖	83
Shox	EA Sports Big	●●●◖	63
Shrek 2	**Activision**	**●●●◖**	**82**
Shrek Super Party	TDK Mediactive	●●◖	64
Siren	Sony CEA	●●●	81
Silent Hill 2	**Konami**	**●●●●◖**	**50**
Silent Hill 3	Konami	●●●●◖	71



BEHIND THE GAME

ICO

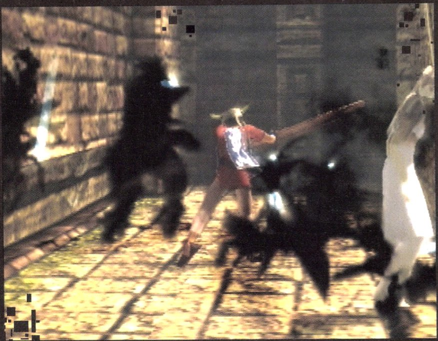
ORIGINALLY APPEARED IN OPM #48

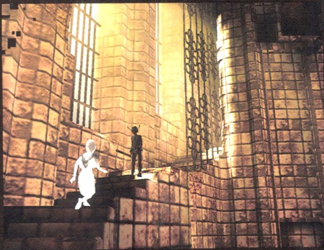
Next month's disc will offer an exclusive hands-on demo of the newest creation from Fumito Ueda and Kenji Kaido, *Shadow of the Colossus*. If that doesn't excite you, then clearly you've never played their 2001 masterpiece, *Ico*. While it's one of the most undisputed critical darlings of the current generation, *Ico* is the subject of heated debate between people who think the game is woefully underappreciated and those who find it overrated. Such polarized views might seem a little odd—but then, *Ico* is hardly your typical game.

At the time of its creation, *Ico* represented a stylistic departure for producer Kaido, whose previous work for Sony CEI included deliriously cheerful fare such as *Ape Escape* and *Tomba*. But his team's PS2 debut shared the same iconoclastic approach to game design as those earlier productions. On its surface, *Ico* hews to the save-the-princess formula that's been a part of gaming for decades: A young adventurer named Ico finds himself trapped in a hostile environment, underequipped but determined to battle the forces of evil and save a beautiful captive. Old news, right?

Not really. *Ico* isn't your typical adventure, and the difference is in the details. From its opening moments, the game sets itself apart from its contemporaries with its stunning visuals. Initially a PS1 title, *Ico* doesn't set any technical benchmarks for the PS2. But its world is rich with atmosphere and an oppressive sense of isolation. The immense scale of the crumbling castle constantly reminds players of their vulnerability.

Its story is the stuff of fairy tales—that is, real fairy tales, in which





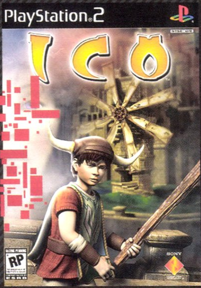
things are rarely happy. The game begins in true brothers Grimm style, with Ico being abandoned to die by the people of his village for the "crime" of having been born with horns. The castle that is to serve as his tomb is ruled by a cruel queen who commands a legion of shadow wraiths. But there is light amidst the shadow, quite literally: a caged princess named Yorda whose white dress is radiant in the castle's gloom.

The relationship between Ico and Yorda gives the game its heart. Rescuing the princess requires players to guide her every step of the way, physically taking her hand to lead her from room to room. And when the shadow wraiths approach to kidnap Yorda for the queen, it is Ico's task to fend them off. Yorda, for her part, doesn't always make things easy; she frequently wanders off as Ico explores the scenery for the next route. Yet in the end, players are forced to rely on this frail, unpredictable girl to succeed.

There is a peculiar otherworldliness to *Ico*, but in the end, the experience is about the bond between two children—a remarkable touch of humanity in what is often a heartless medium. While not a perfect game, it's certainly one of the most memorable. Hunt down the full game if you're so inspired and see if you can understand why we're looking forward to this team's next venture. «

WHAT YOU SAY!!

The Japanese version of *Ico* (in addition to having way better cover art than the U.S. release) features a special bonus: Upon completing the game, you can play through it again and see Yorda's subtitles translated into Japanese. This feature wasn't made available in the U.S. version, but a quick Google search will yield a fan-translated script. Still, maybe it's better not knowing what she says; after all, Ico and Yorda never understood a word the other said, but the bond between them was powerful nonetheless.



READER REVIEWS

KRATOS VERSUS ANAKIN

GOD OF WAR

WHAT YOU SAID

"It's been quite a while since I played a game that revitalized my entire console. *God of War* made me feel as if I was playing my PS2 for the first time. This game breathes new life from beginning to end; the story alone consumed me from the moment Linda Hunt spoke. Her voice some how enveloped me. It made we want to discover Kratos' troubled past—OK, let's cut the crap. This game is probably the most gory, violent, ruthless game I have ever played, and you know what? I loved every single minute of it. For those precious hours I didn't just play as Kratos, but I felt I was him. I was his conscience, not some brain-drained kid in front of television. I controlled the unimaginable power of the Blades of Chaos, tearing up—no, shredding—no, slicing foes like they were butter and I was the hottest knife known to man. Beautiful graphics, unbelievable animations, and unforgettable gameplay make *God of War* not a game, but *the* game. Oh, did I mention the story is really good?"

[●●●●●]

Steve Burns

WHAT WE SAID

"It reminded me why I like to play games."

[●●●●●]

STAR WARS: EPISODE III REVENGE OF THE SITH

WHAT YOU SAID

"I have never played a better *Star Wars* game for PS2. I came in thinking, 'Well, the last one wasn't amazing, so don't get your hopes up,' but two days later I ended up with the satisfying feeling of completing a great game. You end with an amazing alternate ending called 'The Ultimate Revenge of the Sith'—speaks for itself, doesn't it? And this game has some great bonus missions, too (go, Yoda!). Anakin being tempted to the dark side, Kenobi pulling him back…this game is full of sweet moves and supercool movie previews. My only complaint is that it takes about nine hours to beat, but hey, that's what the awesome player-versus-CPU or player-versus-player dueling is for. And it even has co-op!"

[●●●●◖]

Matthew Russell

WHAT WE SAID

"Neither of the two main playable characters really gets a chance to show what being a Jedi Knight is all about."

[●●●○○]

Want to have your say about a recent game? Send your review (don't forget the score!) to opm@ziffdavis.com with the subject "READER REVIEW."

GAME	PUBLISHER SCORE	ISSUE
Silent Hill 4: The Room	Konami ●●●●◖	85
Silent Line: Armored Core	Agetec ●●●◖	70
Silent Scope	Konami ●●●	39
Silent Scope 2	Konami ●●●◖	49
Silent Scope 3	Konami ●●●◖	62
Silpheed: The Lost Planet	Working Designs ●●●◖	40
The Simpsons: Hit & Run	**Vivendi Universal ●●●●**	**72**
The Simpsons: Road Rage	**EA Games ●●●**	**52**
The Simpsons Skateboarding	EA Games ●◖	64
The Sims	**EA Games ●●●●**	**65**
⚡The Sims: Bustin' Out	**EA Games ●●●●◖**	**76**
Sitting Ducks	Hip Interactive ●●●	88
Sky Gunner	Atlus ●●●◖	58
Sky Odyssey	Activision ●●●	40
Sled Storm	EA Sports Big ●●●◖	55
Sly Cooper and the Thievius Raccoonus	**Sony CEA ●●●●●**	**62**
Sly 2: Band of Thieves	**Sony CEA ●●●●●**	**86**
Smash Cars	Metro3D ●●●◖	71
Smash Court Tennis: Pro Tournament	Namco ●●●◖	56
Smash Court Tennis: Pro Tournament 2	Namco ●●●●	82
Smuggler's Run	**Rockstar ●●●●◖**	**39**
Smuggler's Run 2: Hostile Territory	Rockstar ●●●●◖	52
Soccer America: International Cup	Hot-B ●●	48
Soccer Mania	EA/Lego ●●●◖	59
⚡SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs	**Sony CEA ●●●●●**	**60**
⚡SOCOM II: U.S. Navy SEALs	**Sony CEA ●●●●●**	**75**
Soldier of Fortune	Majesco ●●●	52
Sonic Heroes	Sega ●●	77
Sonic Mega Collection	Sega ●●●	88
Soul Calibur II	**Namco ●●●●●**	**72**
Soul Reaver 2	Eidos ●●●	52

GOING BACK TO SOUL CALI

If you don't get a magazine next month, you can safely assume it's because we've been playing too much *Soul Calibur III* to do any work.

GAME	PUBLISHER SCORE	ISSUE
Space Channel 5 Special Edition	Sega ●●●◖	75
Space Race	Infogrames ●●◖	59
Spawn Armageddon	Namco ●◖	76
Speed Kings	Acclaim ●●●●	70
Sphinx and the Cursed Mummy	THQ ●●●◖	75
Spider-Man	**Activision ●●●●◖**	**57**
Spider-Man 2	Activision ●●●◖	84
Splashdown	Infogrames ●●●●	52
Splashdown: Rides Gone Wild	**THQ ●●●●●**	**72**
SpongeBob SquarePants: Battle for Bikini Bottom	**THQ ●●●●◖**	**75**
SpongeBob SquarePants: The Movie	THQ ●●●●◖	87
Spy Fiction	Sammy ●●	85
SpyHunter	**Midway ●●●●◖**	**50**
SpyHunter 2	Midway ●●●	76
Spyro: Enter the Dragonfly	**Vivendi Universal ●●●**	**64**
Spyro: A Hero's Tail	Vivendi Universal ●●	87
⚡SRS: Street Racing Syndicate	Namco ●●●	64
SSX	**EA Sports Big ●●●●●**	**38**
SSX Tricky	**EA Sports Big ●●●●●**	**52**
⚡SSX 3	**EA Sports Big ●●●●●**	**74**
Star Ocean: Till the End of Time	Square Enix ●●●●	84
Star Trek: Shattered Universe	TDK ●●	75
Star Trek Voyager: Elite Force	Majesco ●●◖	53
Star Wars: The Clone Wars	LucasArts ●●●	65
Star Wars Battlefront	LucasArts ●●●●◖	86
Star Wars Bounty Hunter	**LucasArts ●●●**	**64**
Star Wars: Episode III ROTS	LucasArts ●●●	94
Star Wars Jedi Starfighter	LucasArts ●●●◖	56
Star Wars Racer Revenge	LucasArts ●●●●◖	55
Star Wars Starfighter	**LucasArts ●●●●◖**	**43**
Star Wars Super Bombad Racing	LucasArts ●●	45

GAME	PUBLISHER SCORE	ISSUE
Starsky & Hutch	Gotham Games ●●	74
State of Emergency	**Rockstar ●●●**	**55**
Stella Deus: The Gate of Eternity	Atlus ●●●●	93
Stitch: Experiment 626	Sony CEA ●●◖	59
Stolen	Hip Interactive ●●●	94
Street Fighter Anniversary Collection	Capcom ●●●●	84
Street Fighter EX 3	Capcom ●●●◖	39
Street Hoops	**Activision ●●●◖**	**60**
Stretch Panic	Conspiracy ●●●◖	47
Strike Force Bowling	Crave ●◖	82
Stuntman	**Infogrames/Atari ●●●**	**59**
Sub Rebellion	Metro3D ●●●●	62
The Suffering	Midway ●●●	80
Suikoden III	Konami ●●●	63
Suikoden IV	Konami ●●●	89
Summer Heat Beach Volleyball	Acclaim ●●●◖	72
Summoner	THQ ●●●	39
Summoner 2	THQ ●●●◖	62
Sunny Garcia Surfing	Ubisoft ●●●◖	51
Super Bust-A-Move	Acclaim ●●●	41
Super Bust-A-Move 2	Ubisoft ●●●◖	63
Super Monkey Ball Deluxe	Sega ●●●	92
Super Trucks Racing	XS Games ●◖	76
Supercar Street Challenge	Activision ●●◖	52
Superman: Shadow of Apokolips	Atari ●●●◖	63
Surfing H30	Rockstar ●●	40
SWAT: Global Strike Team	Sierra ●●●	74
Swing Away Golf	EA Games ●●●	38
⚡Syphon Filter: The Omega Strain	Sony CEA ●●●	81
Taiko: Drum Master	Namco ●●●●	87
Tak and the Power of Juju	**THQ ●●●◖**	**75**

GAME	PUBLISHER	SCORE	ISSUE
Tak 2: The Staff of Dreams	THQ	●●●◖	88
Tarzan: Untamed	Ubisoft	●●●◖	52
Taz: Wanted	Infogrames	●●●◖	60
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles	Konami	●●◖	75
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 2	Konami	●	86
Tekken 4	**Namco**	**●●●◖**	**61**
Tekken 5	Namco	●●●●	92
Tekken Tag Tournament	**Namco**	**●●●●◖**	**39**
Technic Beat	Mastiff	●●●	89
Tenchu: Fatal Shadows	Sega	●●	90
Tenchu: Wrath of Heaven	Activision	●●●	67
The Terminator: Dawn of Fate	Atari	●●◖	63
Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines	Atari	●◖	77
Terminator 3: The Redemption	Atari	●●●◖	86
Test Drive	**Infogrames**	**●●●◖**	**58**
Test Drive Off-Road: Wide Open	Infogrames	●●●	48
Test Drive: Eve of Destruction	Atari	●●●●	85
Tetris Worlds	THQ	●●	57
Theme Park Roller Coaster	EA Games	●●●●	41
The Thing	Universal	●●●	62
Thunderstrike: Operation Phoenix	Eidos	●◖	52
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2001	EA Sports	●●●	44
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2002	EA Sports	●●●●	55
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2003	EA Sports	●●●●◖	63
⚡Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2004	**EA Sports**	**●●●●●**	**73**
⚡Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2005	EA Sports	●●●●◖	86
Time Crisis 2	Namco	●●●●	49
Time Crisis 3	Namco	●●●●◖	74
Time Crisis: Crisis Zone	Namco	●●●◖	86
TimeSplitters	**Eidos**	**●●●●●**	**39**
TimeSplitters 2	**Eidos**	**●●●●●**	**63**
⚡TimeSplitters: Future Perfect	**EA Games**	**●●●●●**	**91**
TOCA Race Driver 2	Codemasters	●●●●	86
Tokyo Xtreme Racer 3	Crave	●●	76
Tokyo Xtreme Racer Zero	Crave	●●◖	45
Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon	**Ubisoft**	**●●●◖**	**65**
⚡Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Jungle Storm	Ubisoft	●●●◖	78
⚡Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six 3	Ubisoft	●●●●	80
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell	**Ubisoft**	**●●●●◖**	**68**
⚡Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell Chaos Theory	**Ubisoft**	**●●●●●**	**92**
⚡Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell Pandora Tomorrow	**Ubisoft**	**●●●●●**	**82**
Tomb Raider: The Angel of Darkness	**Eidos**	**●●**	**72**
⚡Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3	**Activision**	**●●●●●**	**51**
⚡Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4	**Activision**	**●●●●●**	**63**
⚡Tony Hawk's Underground	**Activision**	**●●●●●**	**76**
⚡Tony Hawk's Underground 2	Activision	●●●●◖	87
Top Angler	Xicat	●●●◖	57
Top Gear Dare Devil	Kemco	●●●◖	41
Top Gun: Combat Zones	Titus	●●●	50
Total Immersion Racing	Empire	●	66
Transformers	Atari	●●●◖	81
Transworld Surf	Infogrames	●●●◖	57
⚡Tribes: Aerial Assault	Sierra	●●●◖	62
Triple Play 2002	EA Sports	●●	55
Triple Play Baseball	EA Sports	●●	45
⚡Trivial Pursuit: Unhinged	Atari	●●	81
True Crime: Streets of L.A.	**Activision**	**●●**	**76**
Tsugunai: Atonement	Atlus	●●●	53
Turok: Evolution	Acclaim	●◖	62
Twisted Metal: Black	**Sony CEA**	**●●●●●**	**47**
⚡Twisted Metal: Black Online	Sony CEA	●●●●	61
Ty the Tasmanian Tiger	**EA Games**	**●●●**	**62**
Ty the Tasmanian Tiger 2: Bush Rescue	EA Games	●●●●	88
UEFA Euro 2004	EA Sports	●●●●◖	82
UFC Throwdown	Crave	●●●◖	58
UFC Sudden Impact	Crave	●●●◖	82
Under the Skin	Capcom	●●●◖	86
Unison	Tecmo	●●●◖	44
Unlimited Saga	Square Enix	●●	70
Unreal Tournament	Infogrames	●●◖	40
The Urbz: Sims in the City	EA Games	●●●◖	88
V-Rally 3	Infogrames	●●●●◖	64
Vampire Night	Namco	●●◖	52
Van Helsing	Vivendi Universal	●●●◖	82
Vexx	Acclaim	●●	67
Victorious Boxers	Empire	●●●◖	51
⚡Vietcong: Purple Haze	Global Star	●◖	88
Viewtiful Joe	Capcom	●●●●◖	85
Viewtiful Joe 2	Capcom	●●●●	88
Virtua Fighter 4	**Sega**	**●●●●●**	**55**
Virtua Fighter 4: Evolution	**Sega**	**●●●●●**	**72**
Virtua Quest	Sega	●●	89
Virtual on Marz	Sega	●●	76
Wakeboarding Unleashed	Activision	●●●●◖	70
Wallace & Gromit in Project Zoo	Bam	●●●	74
War Jetz	3DO	●●◖	48
War of the Monsters	**Sony CEA**	**●●●●●**	**64**
⚡Warhammer 40,000: Fire Warrior	THQ	●●◖	74
Warriors of Might and Magic	3DO	●●◖	44
Wave Rally	Eidos	●◖	53
Way of the Samurai	Bam	●●●◖	59
Way of the Samurai 2	Capcom	●●●	82
Wheel of Fortune	Atari	●●◖	76
Whiplash	Eidos	●●●◖	76
Whirl Tour	Vivendi Universal	●●	63
Whiteout	Konami	●	65
Wild Arms 3	Sony CEA	●●●◖	62
Wild Wild Racing	Interplay	●●●	39
Winback	Koei	●●●●	43
Wipeout Fusion	Bam	●●●●◖	57
Wizardry: Tale of the Forsaken Land	Atlus	●●●	53
Woody Woodpecker: Buzz Buzzard Park	DreamCatcher	●●●	57
⚡World Championship Poker	Crave	●◖	90
⚡World Championship Pool 2004	Jaleco	●●●◖	76
World Destruction League: Thunder Tanks	3DO	●●●	42
World of Outlaws: Sprint Cars	Infogrames	●●●●	55
World Series Baseball 2K3	Sega Sports	●●●●	67
World Soccer: Winning Eleven 6 Int'l	**Konami**	**●●●●●**	**67**
World Soccer: Winning Eleven 7 Int'l	**Konami**	**●●●●●**	**78**
⚡World Soccer: Winning Eleven 8 Int'l	Konami	●●●●◖	90
World Tour Soccer 2002	Sony CEA	●●●●	53
World Tour Soccer 2003	Sony CEA	●●●●	65
⚡World Tour Soccer 2004	Sony CEA	●●●	80
⚡World Tour Soccer 2006	Gathering	●●	91
Worms Forts: Under Siege	Sega	●●●	92
Wrath Unleashed	LucasArts	●◖	78
WRC: World Rally Championship	**Bam**	**●●●●●**	**57**
Wreckless: The Yakuza Missions	Activision	●●	63
WTA Tour Tennis	Konami	●	57
WWE Crush Hour	THQ	●●◖	68
WWE SmackDown! Here Comes the Pain	**THQ**	**●●●◖**	**76**
WWE SmackDown! Just Bring It	**THQ**	**●●●◖**	**52**
WWE SmackDown! Shut Your Mouth	**THQ**	**●●◖**	**64**
⚡WWE SmackDown! vs. Raw	THQ	●●●◖	88
X Squad	EA Games	●●●◖	38
The X-Files: Resist or Serve	Vivendi Universal	●●◖	81
X-Men Legends	Activision	●●●●	87
X-Men: Next Dimension	Activision	●●●	64
X2: Wolverine's Revenge	Activision	●●●	69
Xenosaga Episode I: DWZM	**Namco**	**●●●●**	**66**
Xenosaga Episode II: JVGUB	Namco	●●●◖	90
XGRA: Extreme-G Racing Association	Acclaim	●●●●◖	74
⚡XIII	Ubisoft	●●●◖	75
Yanya Caballista: City Skater	Koei	●●●◖	49
Ys VI: The Art of Napishtim	Konami	●●●◖	90
Yu-Gi-Oh! The Duelists of the Roses	**Konami**	**●●◖**	**67**
Yu-Gi-Oh! Capsule Monster Coliseum	Konami	●●●	88
Yu Yu Hakusho: Dark Tournament	Atari	●●◖	88
Zapper	Infogrames	●●◖	64
ZOE: Zone of the Enders	Konami	●●●●◖	44
Zone of the Enders: The 2nd Runner	Konami	●●●●◖	68

Official U.S. PlayStation Magazine
Issue 97
SONY

COMING NEXT MONTH

WHAT WILL OCTOBER LOOK LIKE IN OPM WORLD?

ON THE COVER

Exclusive review of *Shadow of the Colossus*!

ON THE DISC

PLAY IT!

SHADOW OF THE COLOSSUS
Not sure if you agree with our review? Try out the game for yourself!

BURNOUT REVENGE
Play the sequel to *OPM*'s 2004 Game of the Year!

THE SUFFERING: TIES THAT BIND
Bring on the pain in this sequel to last year's hit!

L.A. RUSH
Classic arcade driving goodness comes to your PS2!

LEGEND OF KAY
Mythic Chinese backdrops house platforming action.

ONE PIECE GRAND BATTLE
Who wants to be King of Pirates?

Plus, two fantastic demo classics!

SLY COOPER AND THE THIEVIUS RACCOONUS
SLY 2: BAND OF THIEVES

WATCH IT!

STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT II
BLITZ: THE LEAGUE
INDIGO PROPHECY
RADIATA STORIES
MOTO GP4
SLAI STEEL LANCER ARENA INTERNATIONAL
PLAYSTATION AT E3:
GAP AT THE SONY PRESS CONFERENCE

REWIND

OPM THROUGH THE YEARS

THE SAGA CONTINUES

OPM is just four issues away from No. 100. Continuing with the theme of the last few months, we're taking a look at Issues #45 through #55. You're going to start noticing games that sound more familiar, franchises that are still huge today, and the debuts of some true classics. Join us for this trip down memory lane.

PlayStation
Dark Cloud
Final Fantasy X
Silent Hill 2
Metal Gear Solid 2

ISSUE #45: JUNE 2001

Cover story: *Dark Cloud*
Reviewed: *The Simpsons Wrestling* (2/5), *Star Wars: Super Bombad Racing* (2/5), *Board Game: Top Shop* (4/5)
Previewed: *Final Fantasy X, Herdy Gerdy*
Most prescient quote: "We can expect the PS3 to be a box that...integrates seamlessly with all the other kinds of entertainment you'd want blaring from your HDTV."

PlayStation
Jak & Daxter
Syphon Filter 3
Tomb Raider

ISSUE #46: JULY 2001

Cover story: *Tomb Raider*
Reviewed: *Gran Turismo 3* (5/5), *Dark Cloud* (5/5), *Crazy Taxi* (4/5), *Red Faction* (5/5)
Previewed: *Jak and Daxter, Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3, Devil May Cry, NBA Street*
Err, right: "I want [the audience] to feel as if they were watching live humans on film." —*Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within* director Hironobu Sakaguchi

PlayStation
Final Fantasy
The Movie • The Games • The History

ISSUE #47: AUGUST 2001

Cover story: *Final Fantasy*
Reviewed: *Twisted Metal: Black* (5/5), *Klonoa 2* (4.5/5), *NBA Street* (5/5)
Previewed: *Spy Hunter, Maximo, SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs, Frequency*
Most perplexing revelation: Sony announces partnerships with AOL, Real Networks, and Macromedia for the PS2's online strategy. So far all three are still MIA.

PlayStation
ICO
The best game you've never heard of
WOW!
Over 50
Fight!

ISSUE #48: SEPTEMBER 2001

Cover story: *Ico*
Reviewed: *Resident Evil—Code: Veronica X* (4.5/5), *Extermination* (2.5/5), *City Crisis* (3/5)
Previewed: *SSX Tricky, Onimusha 2, Stuntman, Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance*
Understatement of the month: "I'm not in the business of selling games to 10-year-olds. I categorically admit that I'm s*** at it." —Rockstar cofounder Terry Donovan

PlayStation
NFL 2K2
PS one Crazy
PS2 Previews
Silent Hill 2
The scariest game ever made
WOW!
Hawk's Pants

ISSUE #49: OCTOBER 2001

Cover story: *Silent Hill 2*
Reviewed: *Time Crisis II* (4/5), *Silent Scope 2* (3.5/5), *Tales of Destiny II* (3.5/5)
Previewed: *Half-Life, The Legend of Alon D'ar, Xenosaga, Smuggler's Run 2*
Best appearance of Solid Snake: An article reprinted from *The Onion* entitled "Video-Game Character Wondering Why Heartless God Always Chooses 'Continue'."

50th Issue Spectacular
PlayStation
Metal Gear Solid 2
Devil May Cry
Grand Theft Auto 3
SSX Tricky
Tekken 4
The Getaway

ISSUE #50: NOVEMBER 2001

Cover story: *Grand Theft Auto III*
Reviewed: *Devil May Cry* (5/5), *Ico* (5/5), *Silent Hill 2* (4.5/5), *Spy Hinter* (4.5/5)
Previewed: *Burnout, Project Zero (Fatal Frame), Blood Omen 2, Splashdown*
Most unreasonably optimistic quote: "They are on a death march right now." —Larry Probst, chairman of the initially Xbox-shy Electronic Arts, on Microsoft's Xbox plans

Metal Gear Solid 2 Reviewed
PlayStation
Metal Gear Solid 2

ISSUE #51: DECEMBER 2001

Cover story: *MGS2: Sons of Liberty*
Reviewed: *MGS2* (5/5), *Ace Combat 04: Shattered Skies* (4.5/5), *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3* (5/5), *Dragon Warrior VII* (4.5/5)
Previewed: *TimeSplitters 2, Max Payne, Medal of Honor: Frontline, Suikoden III*
Most sobering turn of events: After the 9/11 attacks, a host of games were delayed or altered to remove inappropriate content.

PlayStation
Jak & Daxter
The Precursor Legacy

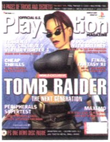
ISSUE #52: JANUARY 2002

Cover story: *Jak and Daxter: The Precursor Legacy*
Reviewed: *Jak and Daxter* (5/5), *Burnout* (4.5/5), *Grand Theft Auto III* (5/5)
Previewed: *Rez, Tekken 4, Soul Calibur II, Need for Speed: Hot Pursuit 2*
Most unusual choices for voice actors: Dee "Twisted Sister" Snider and Max "Vinnie Delpino" Casella in *Jak and Daxter.*

PlayStation
TimeSplitters 2 Exclusive
State of Emergency
Make Games Cooler
Final Fantasy X
Final Fantasy XI

ISSUE #53: FEBRUARY 2002

Cover story: *Final Fantasy X*
Reviewed: *Final Fantasy X* (5/5), *Drakan: The Ancients' Gates* (4/5), *Gitaroo-Man* (3.5/5), *Max Payne* (4/5)
Previewed: *Final Fantasy XI, Star Wars Racer Revenge, Star Wars: Jedi Starfighter*
Should have seen it coming: Sony's PS2 online initiative slips from the projected November 2001 release date to "spring."


PlayStation
Tomb Raider
The Next Generation
Final Fantasy XI
Maximo

ISSUE #54: MARCH 2002

Cover story: *Tomb Raider: The Next Generation*
Reviewed: *Maximo: Ghosts to Glory* (3.5/5), *Pac-Man World 2* (4.5/5)
Previewed: *Virtua Fighter 4, Test Drive*
Pot, meet kettle: "That's a big problem with PS2: There have been too many 'good-looking sequels.'" —Adrian Smith, operations director for *Tomb Raider* developer Core

PlayStation
PS2 Disc This Month
State of Emergency Reviewed!
78 PS One RPGs
Virtua Fighter 4
Xenosaga Exposed
Treasure's Tiny Toons

ISSUE #55: APRIL 2002

Cover story: *Virtua Fighter 4*
Reviewed: *Fatal Frame* (4/5), *Hot Shots Golf 3* (4/5), *State of Emergency* (3/5)
Previewed: *Sky Gunner, Mad Maestro, Mr. Mosquito, Dead to Rights*
Most prescient quote: "The medium for the PS1 was CD-ROMs. The medium for the PS2 is DVDs. The medium for the PS3 will be the Internet." —Ken Kutaragi

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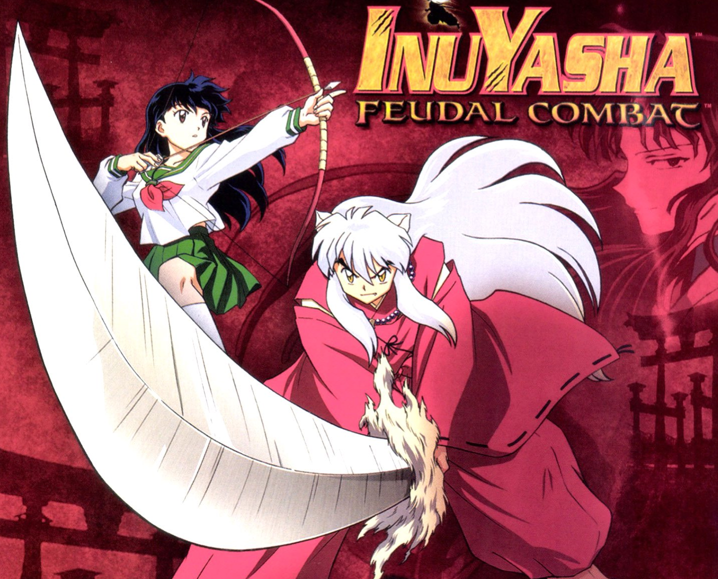

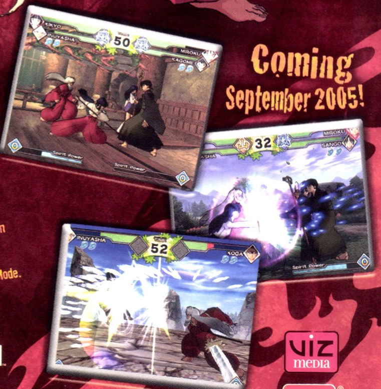

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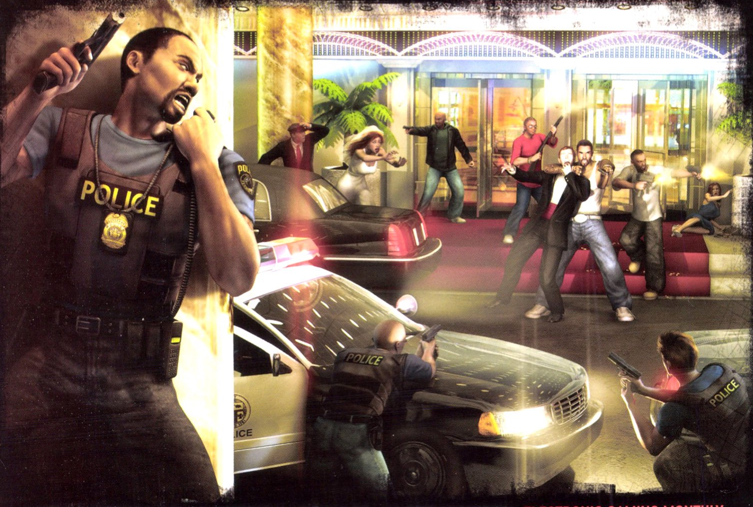
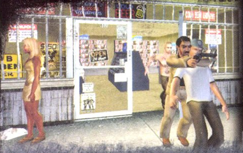


"IT'S A CLASSIC PORTRAIT OF MODERN URBAN LIFE - AS SEEN ON COPS" - ELECTRONIC GAMING MONTHLY



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ON THE DVD

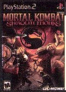
TRY BEFORE YOU BUY

This is why we like playable demos: Before actually getting to play *Mortal Kombat: Shaolin Monks*, we thought it would be another *Special Forces*, or worse. But after playing it, we're actually sorta digging it. Huzzah for hands-on!

PlayStation

PLAY IT

ALSO CHECK OUT
Don't overlook the deliciously gruesome inside-the-game feature on *Mortal Kombat: Shaolin Monks*.



MK: SHAOLIN MONKS

How cruel is it that this demo doesn't actually show you the fatality you learn how to do? Still, it's a nice big demo with multiplayer!

PlayStation 2
BEAT DOWN
CAPCOM

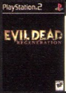
BEAT DOWN: FOV

This game may look like it was made in someone's basement, but the mix of fighting and adventure is strangely compelling.

PlayStation 2
HULK
ULTIMATE DESTRUCTION

INCREDIBLE HULK: UD

Hulk smash huge city! Hulk run up side of skyscraper! Hulk hit bus with lightpost! Hulk climb big buildings like friends from *Rampage*!



EVIL DEAD REGENERATION

Ummm...Ash uses a little person as a projectile weapon. We don't really know what to say about that. Erm...we like kittens?

PlayStation 2
SCOOBY-DOO!
UNMASKED

SCOOBY-DOO! UNMASKED

A 3D, free-roaming platform game based off a *cartoon*? That's crazy talk! What on Earth will they think of next? *Movie* games?

PlayStation 2
PSYCHONAUTS

PSYCHONAUTS

Here's your chance to check out the offbeat platformer everyone's been talking about with a tour through Coach Oleander's head.

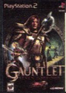
WATCH IT

AND DON'T MISS
The trailer for *Hitman: Blood Money* is incredibly dramatic, and shows off some of Agent 47's new kills and acrobatics.

PlayStation 2
COLOSSEUM

COLOSSEUM: RTF

Here's your chance to slaughter elephants, tigers, and humans as you try to gain your freedom in a bout of gladiatorial conquest.



GAUNTLET: 7 SORROWS

Midway's taking a much more serious approach to this sequel, adding some actual RPG elements. The action's still fast, though.

PlayStation 2
L.A. RUSH

L.A. RUSH

Picture *Burnout* plus *GTA* plus *True Crime* and you've got some idea of what this awesome-looking game has in store for you.

TOMB RAIDER: LEGEND

The new Lara sure looks purty. And her environments sure look amazing. The question is, how will she control? We don't know yet.

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Steve Williams, Eric Lempel, Jesse Caid
Executive Producer
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3D Artists Jason Robinson, Philip Williamson, David Hayes
Producer Jessi Harrison
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GERMAN
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OUR HEART'S DESIRE

EXPLORING A NEW MAGIC KINGDOM

You love RPGs. We know this because of the mounds of mail we received either giving us praise or grief for our choices in August's 20 Essential RPGs. (Maybe *Chrono Cross* and *Suikoden* should have been included—we give!) But one choice can't be argued: *Kingdom Hearts*, the amazing Squaresoft creation that brought Disney into a bona fide RPG. Which is why it does our hearts proud this issue to focus on one of our most anticipated titles of 2005, *Kingdom Hearts II*. *OPM* heartthrob Scooter gets to the heart of the matter with an exclusive first look.

Speaking of anticipated titles, while all the focus at this year's E3 seemed to be on the PS3, there were actually more than 150 PS2 and PSP games either shown or announced for this year. Check out the lineup in our giant fall preview, starting on page 32.

Finally, you might notice Japantown has a new look. We've expanded the column, renamed it J-Town, and devoted it to the gaming news, products, and events that are unique to Japan. Enjoy. « *Tom Byron*

THE OPM FAMILY

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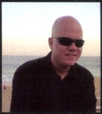
The *Official U.S. PlayStation Magazine* is the only Sony Computer Entertainment America–licensed magazine and is published by Ziff Davis Media Inc. through an exclusive agreement. As such, the *Official U.S. PlayStation Magazine* (*OPM*) remains independent from SCEA and is a critical, autonomous voice that helps readers get more out of their PlayStation system by delivering the most current, comprehensive, and candid coverage of PlayStation software and hardware.

DANA JONGEWAARD has a headache from organizing the fall games preview. That headache got even worse when she realized that it would take roughly 3,360 hours to play all the games. Where will she find a spare five months?



JOE RYBICKI soaked up a week's worth of sun in Los Cabos, Mexico, on his honeymoon. He came back eager to work... which was quickly beaten out of him during deadline. Now he's huddled in a corner, whimpering, *"La cuenta, por favor,"* over and over.

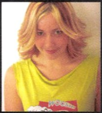
THIERRY NGUYEN has thrown his hat into the ring for the job of penning the screenplay for the upcoming blockbuster *Kingdom Hearts VII*, which is slated for release in 2008 and will serve as a star vehicle for both Jake Lloyd and Keira Knightley.

GIANCARLO VARANINI is a sad clown. He wants to know why his PSP is sitting alone outside, at the mercy of the elements and the creatures that lurk in the forest. An owl should swoop down and pick it up. That'd be totally badical.

LOGAN PARR is fascinated with numbers lately, 1, 2, 3, and 7 in particular. He is also amazed at how often he catches the time 11:11 on the clock. Is there some sort of secret meaning here? What does it all stand for?! Is this the code to unlocking the universe?

RYAN VULK discovered, after firing up the *Burnout Revenge* disc we got this month, that he has superhuman powers of perception and unnatural reflexes. How else can you explain his ability to dodge all the cars he's supposed to hit in traffic attack mode?

ALEJANDRO CHAVETTA will possibly have become really famous by the time you read this (as a result of undisclosed events). In fact, he may not have to worry about living in constant fear ever, therefore he shall be free...and so will be your soul.



ZOE FLOWER likes cake. No, you don't understand. She really, really enjoys cake. Especially chocolate cake. She likes cake so much that she devoted most of her column this month to the subject of sweet, spongy, chocolate cake with deliciously creamy frosting. Really.

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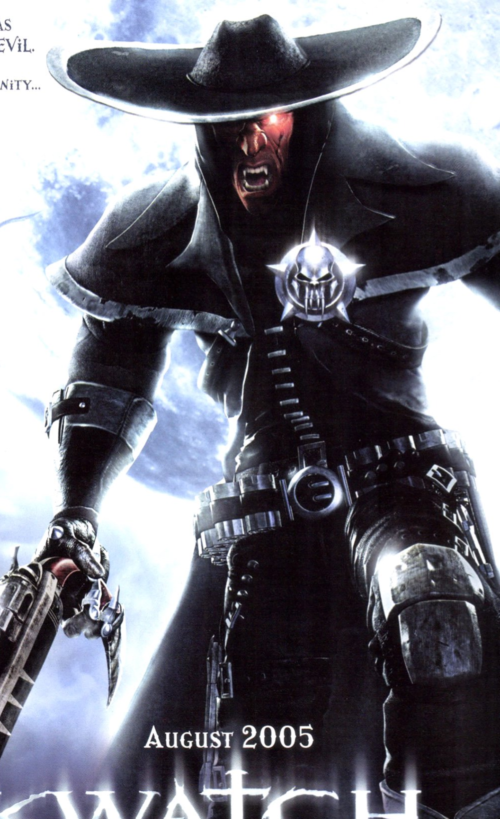

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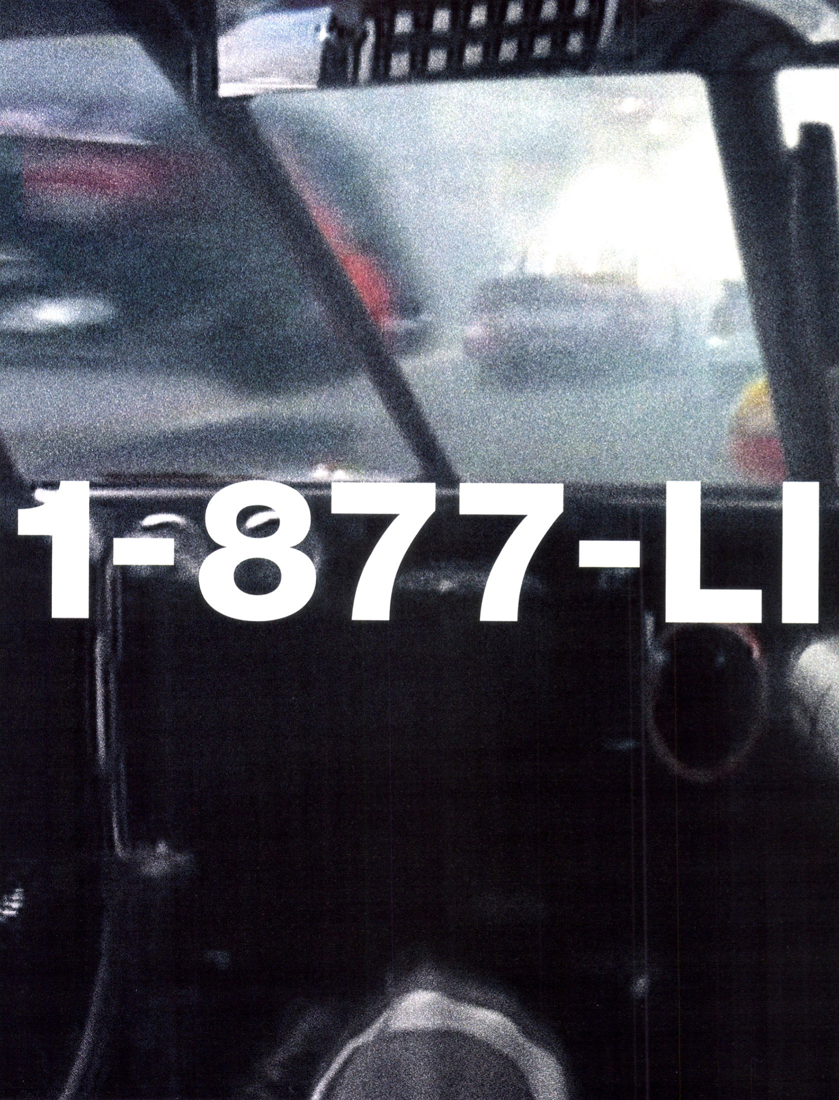

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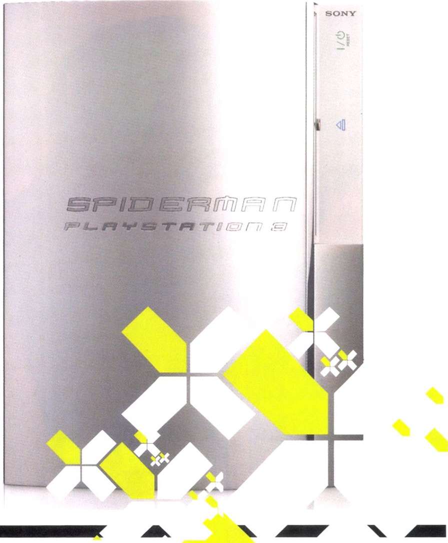


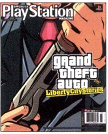
LETTER OF THE MONTH

Isn't it just a little peculiar how Sony is pushing the whole Spider-Man thing these days? Not only does the current "batarang" design of the PS3 have the Spider-Man font on its faceplate, but one of the first things that Sony showed running on a PS3 at E3 was a 3D model of Alfred Molina, who played Doctor Octopus in *Spider-Man 2*, the same film which Sony shipped a million copies of at the North American launch of the PSP. What could this all mean? With a little research I found that *Spider-Man 2* is on Sony's own label, Sony Pictures. So, what are some other Sony licensed movies that they could relate to the PS3?

How about a *Stone Cold*–themed PS3, with that dashing Tom Selleck's mug on the front? Or what about a blood-red *Underworld*-styled PS3, with a little patch of shag carpet on the top, for the furry were-beast in all of us?

The point I'm belaboring is that, if we look at the most celebrated games on Sony's hardware, we see that it's the original titles (*God of War, Lumines, Burnout 3*) that are really making a significant mark on the gaming world, not the ones constricted to a movie license. So what, just exactly, is up with that whole Spider-Man thing?

Alex Mitchell
via e-mail



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PSP GOING SOFT?

Sony seems to have a serious problem on hand with the PSP. You see, if it REALLY wants to beat Nintendo in the handheld market, it needs something called GAMES! Sure there was a great launch lineup, but now I've been waiting for months for something new to come out. Especially NOT ANOTHER DRIVING GAME! Then you have the ridiculously overpriced UMD movies. It seems there are more movies coming out for this system than there are games—what the hell's with that? I mean, we can put our own movies on our PSPs and at a fraction of the cost! I seriously hope somebody gets the ball rolling here because the only decent-looking nondriving game coming down the pipeline is *Daxter*. I can also watch my *Killzone 2* movie only so many times! I truly hope this cool machine doesn't get overlooked because of all the new hardware getting ready to launch. Right now, a five-year life span doesn't bode well for this little unit!

Dan Meloche
via e-mail

We're with you on the games thing (see page 20, for example), but a quick Amazon search shows plenty of UMDs for $14; that doesn't seem to us to be all that outrageous.

GAMERS ARE TALKING ABOUT

STRAIGHT FROM THE OPM MESSAGE BOARDS

PSYCHO CIRCUS

The Internet is all aflutter with impressions of the excellent *Psychonauts*, with folks popping out of the woodwork to trumpet the qualities of what's being perceived as an underappreciated game.

Looz got the ball rolling on our message boards by saying, "This game is absitively, posolutely the craziest, most hilarious game of the past few years. It's simple platform fun. When I play it, I can't help but think about the old *Crashes*, *Spyros*, and *Gexes* of the first PlayStation."

Fox-Brutus displayed his adventure-game cred, saying, "No one should really be surprised that the game is friggin' hilarious—well, no one who played the *Monkey Island* games.... Oh wait, that's just me."

"It's the writing and voice acting that makes the game stand out," said **Master-Sauce**. "It's definitely worth a rental."

And **c_strife97** concurred, saying, "The actual gameplay is pretty standard, but the writing and production really make it an awesome game."

OH BOY, BOOBS!

Up sprang a fairly surprising thread about *The Guy Game* being discontinued due to its inclusion of a 17-year-old girl shown in dishabille.

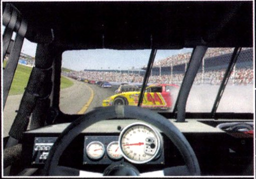
Oralb808 defended the game, saying, "The time I rented [it] I had fun with it. Interesting trivia, stupid hilarious comments by college sluts, entertaining mini-games, breasts...the game had it all."

JustinCredible1 was a bit more incensed. "I'm 22," he said; "I'd like to play games that aren't *Barney's Super Lame Adventure*. I think censorship is f***ing bulls***. They could have easily edited out the 17-year-old instead of being pansy asses about it."

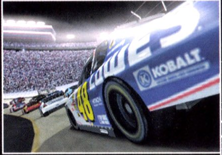
From a more pragmatic (though no less foul-mouthed) standpoint, **Mulletlicious** said,"If this was censoring something I actually gave a flying f*** about, I'd probably do something."

But it was **ohJTBehaaave** who may have unearthed the real reason for the supposed ban: "I'd say snag a copy now if you can, because its value is going to keep going up—an eBay gold mine."

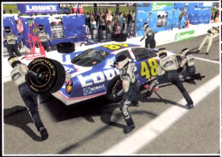
Finally, **Fox-Brutus** closed the thread by saying, "Girl under 18, naked on video...doesn't that constitute underage pornography? Should some of you be defending underage pornography?"



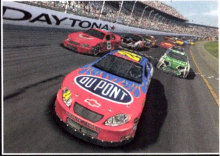
You're breaking the **DRAFT** when you see a massive wreck beginning in front of you.



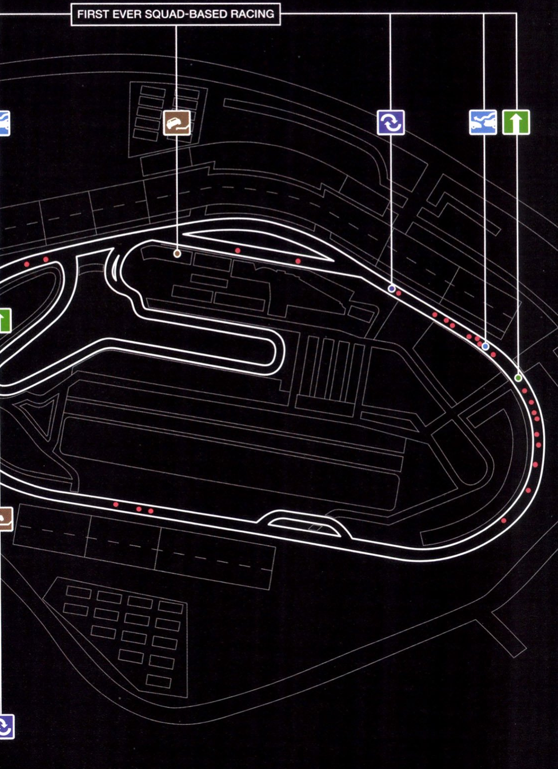
You tell your teammate to get on your tail and **FOLLOW** you through the pile-up.



You call your team to **PIT** so they can help you keep your track position.



A split second before your car slams into the wall, you use the real time **SWAP** feature to jump into your lead teammate's car and race flat-out for the checkered flag.



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FORCE FEEDBACK

Everyone knows that the original *Star Wars* is an incredible starting point for a videogame. That is, everyone EXCEPT LucasArts. Yes, you gave us cases of *Starfighter* games. Yes, you gave us more pod-racing games than any one of us asked for. Every once in a while you hand us a few Jedi games, and who could forget *Battlefront*, and as of late, *Lego Star Wars*? Well, it's getting old.

George Lucas has made more money on PEZ dispensers than original *Star Wars* games. And it's a crying shame. Everyone seems to cater to the new movies, and it's high time someone at LucasArts realized that the only *Star Wars* films anybody really loved were the originals. All we're asking for is an honest playthrough of the first three movies, with the characters we know and love.

GerNay3@aol.com
via e-mail

What, *Rebel Assault* wasn't good enough for you? (Don't answer that.) Our guess is that there has never been a direct playthrough of the original trilogy precisely because it is so beloved; there's no way Lucas could please all his fans.

BARGAIN HUNTER

I don't get what the big deal is with the next-generation games costing any more than they did before. The only morons PAYING that hefty initial price are the impatient and the wealthy, both of whom would do well to part with their money. It might teach them a lesson. Someday.

In any case, I haven't paid more than $19.99 for a game since....well, I don't know when. I don't HAVE to make some big-budget disc spin inside my hardware of choice the DAY and MOMENT it comes out. I do not live a sad and desperate life wherein Snake and Leon Kennedy are my only friends and we all get together on Fridays and pine for Lara Croft. I've got other things to do, like work and blog and see friends and travel and (believe it or not) touch my real, live girlfriend.

So whenever I get around to finding that title for my savory price point of less than $20, I pick it up and enjoy it just as much as the dolts who paid three times that much for the same experience. Quit crying, babies.

Mark Buckingham
via e-mail

Wow, that's...harsh.

GODS AND MONSTERS

On page 83 of Issue #95 you said Hercules was not a god. Hercules became a god after his mortal life ended.

Cody Kadrmas
via e-mail

Yeah, you're right, but we meant it in the sense that Hercules wasn't *born* a god and doesn't have a title like "god of coolness" like the rest of the natural-born sons and daughters of Olympus.

ONE FOR THE BANANA

All I hear is how Sony's new PS3 controllers look like crap. They've been referred to as bananas, boomerangs, and countless other unmentionable objects. Seriously though, would Sony really screw us loyal customers over like that? Everyone complains about how the new controllers will feel, but I have faith in Sony to make them work. Anyone stupid enough to let how the controllers look affect which next-gen system to buy has no mind of his own and only listens to the hype in the media. I don't care how the controllers look because nobody plays videogames looking at the controller.

Nate Meyer
via e-mail

Well, it's not so much about how the banana looks, Nate, but how it feels. Most of the objections and criticisms we've seen have centered around the fact that the boomerang looks awkward as hell to hold. Your point about Sony not betraying its fans is a good one, but it's ultimately moot, as the horseshoe is *only a prototype.* «

SURVEY TIME!

Tell us what you think of your favorite PlayStation mag in the the 2005 *Official U.S. PlayStation Magazine* Editorial Study. It'll only take a few minutes, and upon completion you'll be eligible to win a $300 American Express Check, redeemable practically anywhere. Just go to gamersvoice.1up.com and survey away.

CORRECTION

In the review of the *Constantine* DVD, the comic the film is based on was incorrectly called *Hellraiser*, when, as everyone knows, it's actually *Hellblazer*. Sorry about that.

ASK US ANYTHING

AND WE'LL ANSWER

DISCOUNT THIS

Q I just found *Ico* for $17.99 at EB Games. On a scale of 1 to 10 how cool is this find?

Dylan Banks
vie e-mail

A Two, as in the number of dollars you saved off the list price. Get back to us when you find it for $9.99.

I LOVE THE HADES

Q I was playing *God of War* when I noticed something that did not sound right. In the opening scene, when Kratos is on the boat, he yells, "Foul beasts, I will send you back to the depths of Hades!" Now shouldn't that be back to the depths of hell, or perhaps the underworld. Maybe I don't know as much about Greek mythology as I thought I did, but isn't Hades the ruler of the underworld?

name withheld
via e-mail

A In Greek mythology, Hades is the name for both the world of the dead and its ruler.

WIRELESSLY WIRED

Q I own the old PS2 with the USB ports still on it. Is there any way to get a network adapter but attach a wireless USB device to get a signal from my hot spot?

Mr. Pants
via e-mail

A Yes and no. You can't use a USB device, but look for a "wireless Ethernet bridge" or "wireless access point"; these products allow any device with a wired Ethernet connection (like your network adapter) to connect to a wireless network.

SOUND ADVICE

Q Will PS1 and PS2 memory cards work on PS3? I don't want to lose access to my save files!

Chad M. Harris
via e-mail

A It doesn't look like it, but don't fret; it's likely someone will come up with a way to transfer files via Flash drive or something.

BLOG OF THE MONTH

"I don't want games to mirror reality. I want games to be colorful and whimsical and fantastic, which were the hallmarks of the 8- and 16-bit era. That's what drew me to them in the first place way back when, and I think that's what my gamer's heart still longs for now. I don't want to see beads of sweat dripping off the players in *NBA Live*; I can watch that on TV or go to a game. I don't want to see people getting brutally (and graphically) murdered for no reason in any of the utterly asinine *Grand Theft Auto* games; I can read about that in the paper every day. I want to roll katamaris, grab 1UP mushrooms, nudge Kirby along with rainbow lines...the sort of things that made me love videogames to begin with. I realize that this all makes me sound like Dana Carvey's Grumpy Old Man from back in his *SNL* days ('In my day, we didn't have fancy plasma grenades...'), but it's the honest truth, and I'm glad it finally dawned on me."

Count Billy
countbilly.1UP.com

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PG
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Jim Henson's LABYRINTH
Where Everything Seems Possible and Nothing Is What It Seems.
PG
"Fun, fantasy and terrific action! Moviemaking doesn't get much smarter, funnier, better than this!"
R
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HYPE

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FALL FRENZY

169 GAMES ARE HEADED YOUR WAY

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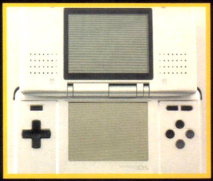
SONY
POWER
HOLD
SELECT
START



THE POWER OF SOFTWARE

During the week of April 18, the Japanese market saw the release of two newly colored DS units, as well as the release of the pet simulator *Nintendogs*. That week, 96,191 Nintendo DS units were sold, compared to the PSP's 33,004 units. In fact, the DS sold more units in that week than the PSP, Xbox, PS2, GameCube, Game Boy Advance, and GBA SP combined.

WHAT'S UP WITH THE PSP?

IS ENTHUSIASM FOR THE PSP DWINDLING, OR IS IT JUST A SLOW SALES PERIOD?

It's amazing how the perception of Sony's PlayStation Portable has changed within a matter of months. "The PSP will elevate portable entertainment out of the handheld gaming ghetto," said Kaz Hirai, president of Sony CEA, at the Consumer Electronics Show earlier this year. "The PSP is full of innovation far superior to anything on the market today. Just as the PlayStation in 1995 revolutionized gaming and the way our industry does business, PSP will serve as the disrupter in the portable entertainment space." However, the way the industry does business also makes it easy for something like the PSP to cause outlandish expectations amongst consumers with statements like that. And the way that consumers ultimately do business requires that quality be partnered with a consistent flow of software for a new system. As electronics history has shown, having great hardware is only part of the equation.

The PSP has traveled the spectrum of being hailed as the greatest piece of hardware since the introduction of the original PlayStation to being treated like a Goodwill store where developers drop off bare-bones ports and shoddy, old games. Since the release of the PSP on March 24, 2005, to the time of this writing, there have been approximately 30 games released, 17 of which were released during the launch window. Around 10 or so of the games available could be considered ports of PlayStation 2 games, which is about one-third of the entire PSP library. And if you work out the math with the number of games released since the launch period, it comes out to less than one PSP game release per week—.76 games to be exact.

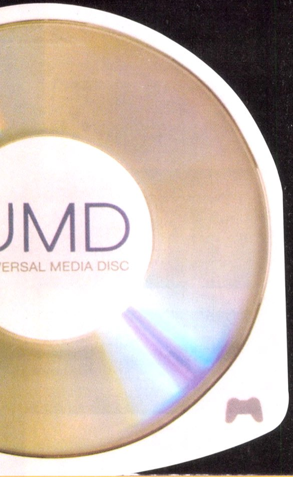
Even though there's always a slow period after the launch of new hardware, that's still not a lot of games for a platform that's supposed to change the face of portable gaming. What's even sadder is that those figures don't actually take into account the games that are worth buying. Out of the 30 games released as of press time, nine have received scores of four or above from *OPM*. That's not too bad until you consider that 14 games have scored a three or lower, tipping the balance in favor of mediocrity.

But as far as potential PSP customers were concerned, it was easy to buy into what Hirai and third-party developers were saying before the PSP launched. It seemed like everything the PSP came in contact with would instantly turn into gaming gold. "These are not ports," Warren Wall, executive producer and head of EA's Team Fusion, told *OPM* back in January 2005. "That's not what we're after. We want something that's compelling and new, but we do have great franchises, and we want the experiences on PSP." While EA succeeded in delivering a somewhat original take on its *Need for Speed* franchise with *Rivals*, the other five of its six launch games essentially turned out to be either toned-down ports (thus qualifying them as "original") or just ports with a few extra minigames thrown into the mix.

But EA is hardly the only culprit. Sony's own first-party teams are just as guilty. Early versions of 989 Studios' PSP baseball game still featured the color-coded DualShock button icons shortly before it was released. Capcom's *Darkstalkers* is a port of a Dreamcast collection, just with a new survival mode and a few extras thrown in. *Tony Hawk's Underground 2 Remix* features four new levels and some added multiplayer options, but most of its content is from the PS2 version of the game. The list goes on, but the point is that most PSP games simply weren't built from the ground up; many publishers just wanted (or needed) to cash in on what would undoubtedly be an incredible hardware launch.

MOST PSP GAMES WEREN'T BUILT FROM THE GROUND UP.

But it wasn't. At least, not as incredible as it was expected to be. American Technology Research conducted a survey of 150 retailers as a barometer of PSP sales during its launch period. Only 50 of the 150 retailers reported that their shipments of PSPs had sold out. Sony's own numbers reported that 602,000 units out of a million-unit shipment were sold, falling in line with results from the survey. Still, industry analysts were optimistic. "We think the PSP will be the dominant handheld gaming device in two years," says USB analyst Mike



WHAT GHETTO?

Nintendo's line of Game Boy products has been some of the best-selling videogame hardware, and the Nintendo DS has already sold 5 million units worldwide. Here's what the PSP is up against:

Game Boy Sales*

JAPAN

Game Boy	32.47 million
Game Boy Advance	13.21 million
Game Boy software	157.04 million
Game Boy Advance software	47 million

AMERICA

Game Boy	44.06 million
Game Boy Advance	24.81 million
Game Boy software	190.61 million
Game Boy Advance software	96.47 million

*Through the end of fiscal year 2004

Wallace in his Video Game Industry Overview. Of course, anything can happen in two years, but if there continues to be a trickle of releases, let alone quality releases, then chances of the PSP assuming that role are pretty slim.

Indeed, it's almost impossible to predict what will happen, but if E3 is any indication, it might be a little rough going. There were plenty of PSP announcements at the show, but most of those games are either ports with the requisite minigame extras thrown in or are based on preexisting licenses or properties. As for actual physical software support for the PSP at the show, some considered it to be a little lacking. "What the f*** was up with the lack of games for PSP at E3?" wrote David Jaffe, director of *God of War*, in one of his blog entries. "When I get back, I have to chase down some answers. There has to be a s***load of games being made. Why were they not being shown?"

Then there's the question of the PlayStation 3 and how it will affect the PSP. With game budgets becoming an increasing strain on companies, how will a publisher or developer find enough money to develop a solid project for the PlayStation 3 and then turn around and do a PSP game, or vice versa? Many companies will have to choose one platform over the other in many cases, and in the circumstances that they don't, the potential for ports increases exponentially because there simply isn't enough time or money to do anything else. Could it be that developers are canceling PSP projects so they can go to work on the PS3 instead?

Or maybe that's not the right question to ask. Maybe developers are just losing faith. That certainly may be the case in Japan, where sales of Nintendo DS games have been faring better than sales of PSP games. Six Nintendo DS games placed in the top 20 in sales during the last week of May. Not a single PSP game managed to perform as well during the same time period. This contradicts what people predicted based on earlier trends, which showed sales of PSP hardware and software gaining steam and beating the DS by a significant margin in the early months of 2005.

Perhaps the lack of apparent support merely has to do with the PSP's current position in the market when publishers and developers look at the bottom line. There have reportedly been 5 million Nintendo DS units shipped worldwide, while 2.5 million PSPs have been shipped around the globe. However those numbers do neglect one very important factor: The DS has already launched in Europe, while the PSP European launch is scheduled for September. Though it's unlikely that 2.5 million units will be sold in Europe in any short period of time, it's still a pretty significant difference for publishers to take into consideration when pledging support.

At any rate, it almost seems like Sony was banking on the PSP's extra media-playing capabilities to lessen the impact of a potential gaming lull. "[The PSP user base] will expand quickly with support from motion picture studios and the music companies," Hirai said in an interview in *OPM* #91.

THERE'S THE QUESTION OF HOW THE PS3 WILL AFFECT THE PSP.

In fact, sales of UMD movies continue to do surprisingly well for a format that's less than a year old. At least two UMD movies have sold well over 100,000 units each, putting the total number of UMD movie sales possibly around the 500,000 mark (actual figures were not available as of press time). This also doesn't include the copies of *Spider-Man 2* that were included in the first shipment of PSPs. In addition, studios are seemingly announcing more and more support every day for the PSP, seizing the opportunity to sell yet another version of a film or TV show. Still, it all comes down to this: With the drought of game releases, PSP owners are obviously looking for something else to do with their PSPs, and that something else seems to be watching movies or TV shows. Listening to music may not be as much of a factor, considering the popularity of the iPod, but it's still a feature that could distract the casual PSP owner from the lack of game releases.

However, there are a lot of PSP owners out there wondering why they forked out $250 for a gaming device that they've actually used more for watching movies or listening to music rather than playing games. Looks like it'll take a little more than promises and technology to really get handheld gaming out of the ghetto. «

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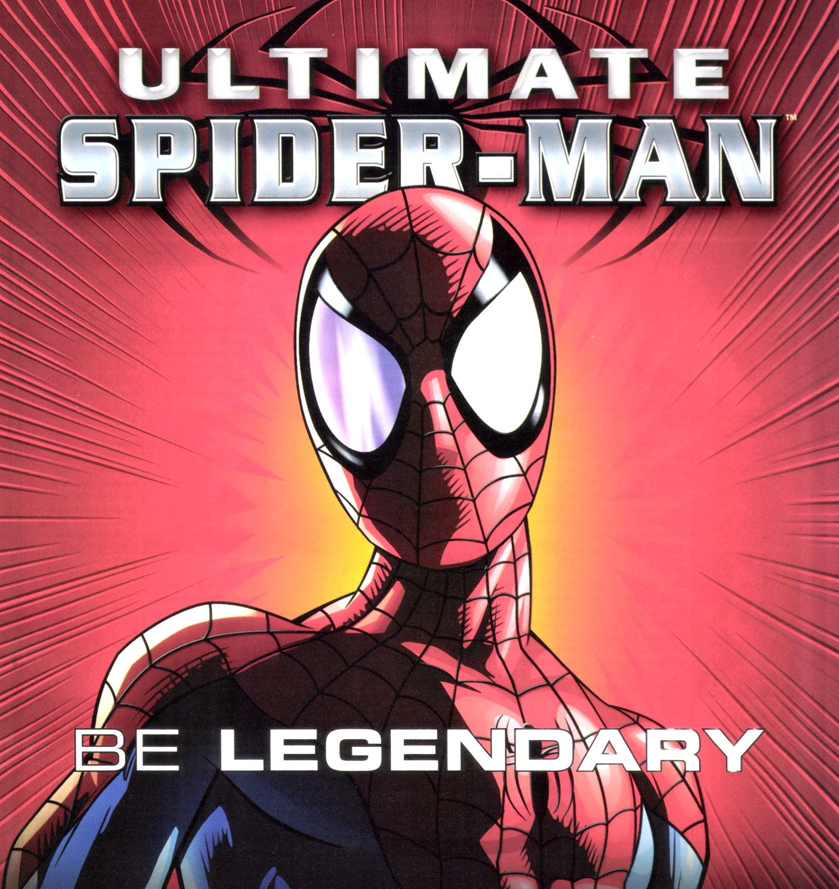

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WIRELESS GAME

MARVEL

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THE MONTH AHEAD FOR YOU AND YOUR PLAYSTATION

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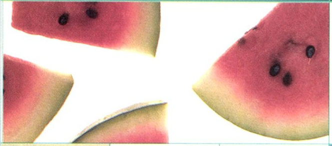
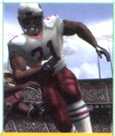
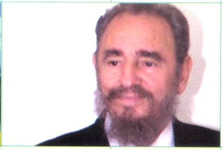
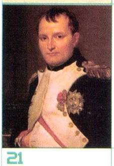
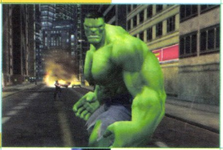
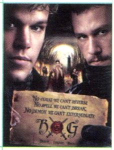
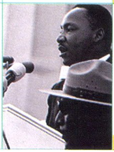
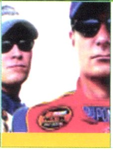
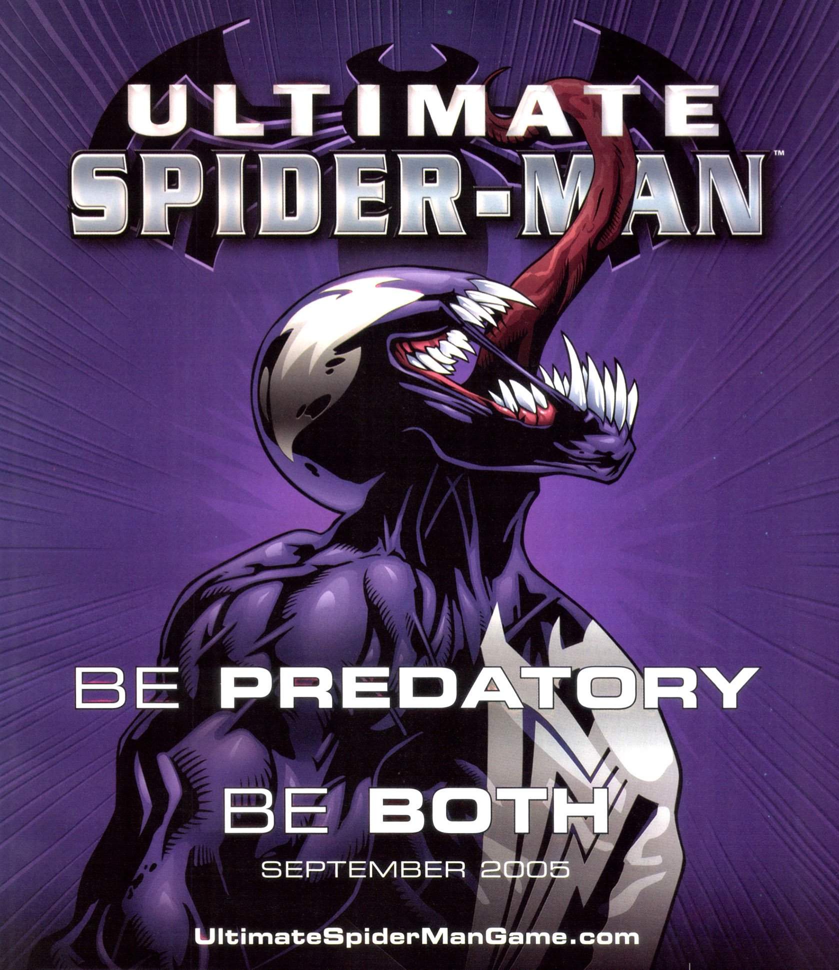
			03 Some amazing collision of fate has made **Martin Sheen's** and **Martha Stewart's** birthdays the same day as **Watermelon Day**. Time to paint the town red!	04	05 The only reason to even consider going to ***Dukes of Hazzard*** is to see Willie Nelson and Burt Reynolds. You can find better Jessica Simpson footage elsewhere.	06 Pour one out for **Rick James,** who died on this day in 2004. Please, for the love of his disembodied spirit, do not go around town quoting that Chappelle skit.
07 	08 Thank yourselves for the wonderful day that is **Dollar Day**. If we didn't get our first dollar pressed on this day, imagine what our currency would be. Drachmas? Ape shavings? Who knows!	09 Celebrate your love of U.S. currency by purchasing the most American game in existence: ***Madden NFL 06***. John Madden loves you all. [NEW GAMES]				13 **Fidel Castro** is going to totally have an awesome socialist republic–style birthday bash! We're sending him tickets to yesterday's release of *Deuce Bigelow: European Gigolo*.
	15 Mock the French all you want, but you've got to give them credit for having **Napoleon Bonaparte**, born on this day, as a leader. Imagine having this little dude roll all over your country!	16 If you're the kind of kid who played cowboys and vampires, you might want to check out ***Darkwatch***. Otherwise, there's ***Inuyasha: Feudal Combat*** and ***NHL 06***. [NEW GAMES]		18	19 From the guy who brought you ***Freaks and Geeks*** and ***Undeclared*** comes the film nightmare of nerds across the whole of existence: being known as the ***40-Year-Old Virgin***.	20
21	22	23 Do you sometimes raise your fist in anger and realize that it ain't so big? If so, pick up ***The Incredible Hulk: Ultimate Destruction*** today. [NEW GAMES]			26 We love Terry Gilliam and his wacky films, so while we're sad that he'll never get to finish ***Don Quixote,*** we'll gladly watch his next film, ***The Brothers Grimm***.	 No curse we can't reverse No spell we can't break No demon we can't exterminate
28 Take a moment of silence and remember that one **Martin Luther King** delivered his "I Have a Dream" speech today. Learn to love, not hate! Loooooove!		30 For those of you who are history buffs, you can check out the latest ***Namco Museum Collection***. If you live in the present, ***NASCAR 06*** is here. [NEW GAMES]				



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WIRELESS GAME

MARVEL

PS3 PARTY

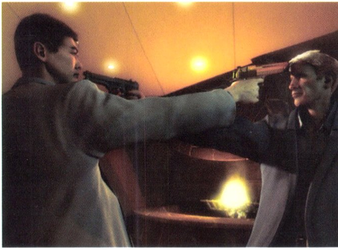
THIRD-PARTY SUPPORT LINES UP FOR SONY'S NEW HARDWARE

As you saw in the PlayStation 3 feature in last month's issue, we already got a glimpse of some third-party PlayStation 3 support during Sony's press conference at E3. However, there were also a lot of PlayStation 3 games that didn't get shown at the conference—likely due to the fact that they've also been announced as Xbox 360 games, and as such, are further along on that hardware than they would be on PS3. Here's a look at a few of the third-party games we can look forward to.

STRANGLEHOLD

That guy with the gun barrel placed snugly against his face should look familiar to fans of Hong Kong action films—it's Chow Yun Fat, who takes on the starring role in Midway's action game *Stranglehold*. Joining Chow Yun Fat (as he has done a few times before) is world-renowned action director John Woo, the man behind *Mission: Impossible II*, *Face/Off*, and dozens of Hong Kong action films. Woo will contribute to the game's action sequences to help give them that stylized movie look, but there's no word yet if you can expect to see a lot of random doves flying in the background. *Stranglehold* is currently in development at the same Midway internal studio responsible for *Psi-Ops: The Mindgate Conspiracy*.

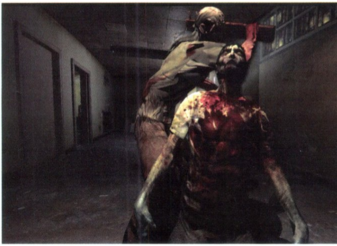
Pub. Midway **Dev.** Midway



CONDEMNED: CRIMINAL ORIGINS

We're not really sure what to think of Sega's *Condemned: Criminal Origins*. At first, it kind of looks like a boxcar-hobo simulator, complete with everything from hobo pipe fights to hobo hide-and-go-seek, but in dark and creepy environments. But there is more to *Condemned* than that. You play as an agent in the FBI's special crimes unit whose primary mission is to hunt down serial killers, but it would appear that agent Ethan Thomas isn't quite all there himself, leading to the possibility of having to deal with some psychological disturbances later on in the game.

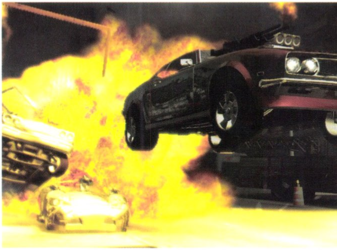
Pub. Sega **Dev.** Monolith



FULL AUTO

We hate to simplify *Full Auto* down to three words, but it's a pretty apt description: *Burnout* with guns. As if moving at breakneck speeds isn't enough, *Full Auto* also throws in some car combat by giving your vehicle an insane number of weapons for taking down other drivers. But there's a slight twist to all of this. Much like *Prince of Persia*'s time feature, *Full Auto* gives you the chance to rewind and correct mistakes over the course of a race with its unwreck feature. Let's say you just plowed right into a wall because you went a little too fast into a turn—all you have to do is rewind a little bit and hit the brakes before you make the turn.

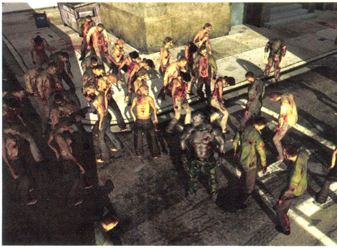
Pub. Sega **Dev.** Sega

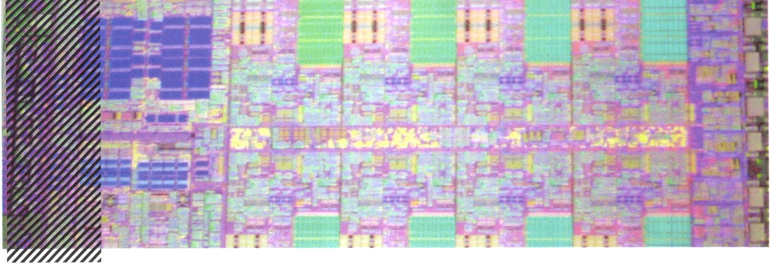


POSSESSION

Have you ever watched a zombie movie and wondered what it would be like to assume the role of one of the undead? You wouldn't have to worry about running, hiding, or locking yourself into a small cabin while the front porch floods with countless rotting corpses. That's the idea behind Blitz Games' *Possession*, in which you take control of a zombie general charged with unleashing his minions on an enormous city. As you shamble through the city, you'll eventually gain access to different areas with varying levels of resistance—some might be regular citizens going about their daily business, while others may be police or special forces units sent to quell the zombie rebellion. Crazy stuff, but we're glad zombies finally get their place in the spotlight.

Pub. Not Announced **Dev.** Blitz Games





CELL-EBRATE GOOD TIMES

IBM EXPLAINS WHY THE PS3'S CELL PROCESSOR IS LEADING THE CHARGE INTO NEW TERRITORY

You know the Cell processor is a big deal. Companies (especially ones as big as IBM, Sony, and Toshiba) don't often get together and come up with proprietary technology with the intent of it being a small-time project. But the processor is a big deal for a few reasons. Not only is it powering the PlayStation 3 hardware, but it's also marking a fundamental shift in hardware design—a shift that could potentially leave companies like Intel scrambling to keep up. We spoke with Dr. Peter Hofstee, a lead engineer from the Cell design team, to get some more information on the Cell processor and how, with the help of the PS3, it will become the next big thing.

OPM How did the Cell project get started?
DR. PETER HOFSTEE It got started with a CEO-level conversation between Sony and IBM. In that conversation, they identified the synergy between IBM and its strength as a technology company, and Sony in the media and content space. They saw a basis for working together, so in the summer of 2000—with Toshiba as a technology partner—representatives from the three companies got together and started hammering out a concept for what became the Cell processor.

OPM Was it always a goal to design a new type of architecture?
PH We looked at a number of alternatives—a rather broad number, some of them being sort of more in line with what you would expect from general trends in computing. I think it was Mr. Kutaragi who said that we should go beyond that and do something that was more specifically suited for media and gaming in this new space that is supposed to support a new vision of interactivity.

OPM How is the architecture of the Cell processor specifically beneficial to gaming?
PH [We had] three main targets. The first was to provide a level of performance in this chip that would be far beyond what you would see in a PC processor today. [For] the second goal, even though the structure of this processor was derived from a server-type expertise that IBM has, we brought in a lot of real-time controls that you wouldn't find in server processors. This is important for gaming. Also, because we were very much thinking of this processor as something that sits between a user and a network, we paid a lot of attention to the security architecture. There's a good bit of innovation in this chip that provides a hardware basis for security and privacy. The last goal: [While] it's important to note that the next-generation game system was the driving force to do this, the vision from the very start was that this would be an architecture more broadly applied. We really defined it to be a standard architecture, something that will hopefully be used for a long time and have many iterations.

OPM How has the education process for developers progressed? Have they been receptive to the idea of what the Cell processor is?
PH We had the benefit of having a software team inside the design center. We had representatives from all three companies working very closely with us. We actually went through a number of iterations on the architecture itself based on the feedback from the software team. We wanted to make sure not only that what we created had impressive peak performance numbers, but also that a reasonable programming effort could get to those numbers. Only in the last few months have we talked about programming models, but in the next few months we will publish more information on the models and the architecture of the chip. Right now, it's sort of a mix of reactions. There are people that have come from embedded backgrounds and are very excited about the architecture. For people that come from a more general-purpose programming background, we're heading toward an adjustment in [hardware]. But it takes programmers about three months to become familiar with it and become very enthusiastic.

"THE NEXT-GEN GAME SYSTEM WAS THE DRIVING FORCE."

OPM How is the multicore design different from just having multiple processors?
PH We felt we had to do something about the phenomenon known as the memory wall. In the last 20 years, microprocessors have gotten faster by a factor of 1,000, but the memory latency, or the amount of time it takes for memory to keep up with the processor, hasn't changed. It's like a bucket brigade with 100 people between you and the water, but because you can only get five buckets going, that immediately tells you that it's going to be inefficient. For Cell, what we did was use a technique [to make the process much more efficient].

OPM Is there a point of comparison for the power of the Cell processor?
PH If you just look at the eight synergistic processors on the chip and the power core as well, on media applications, each of these processors can outperform a PC processor. We usually see a factor-of-10 performance advantage against PC processors, but if you're doing something with a more traditional workload, then you probably won't see that type of performance improvement. «

THE POWER OF THE CELL, IN LAYMAN'S TERMS

As Dr. Hofstee explains it, "The Cell processor itself has in excess of 200 gigaflops, which is 200 billion operations per second. So, imagine if you had 5 billion people in the world doing 40 calculations a second—that would be pretty amazing."

GAME MACHINE OR COMPUTER?

Sony has already started making changes to the PlayStation 3 hardware since its unveiling this past May at E3. In a recent interview with the Japanese site Game Watch, Sony Computer Entertainment President Ken Kutaragi said that the hard drive will not be shipping with the PlayStation 3, but instead will be featured as an add-on peripheral. This move will give customers the option to buy higher-capacity drives and will help to keep the base cost of the system down. Interestingly, Kutaragi also said that Sony plans to install an operating system (which will most likely be some form of Linux) on the drive, adding to the PS3's image as a computer instead of a game console. «

GET A JOB

Since E3, there has been speculation as to the function of the three network ports on the back of the PlayStation 3. Originally, one was to be used for connecting the console to the Internet, one would be used for connecting additional hardware (such as another PS3), and the third would be used for router purposes. Well, it seems that Ken Kutaragi and the design team at Sony have stripped this feature from the PS3 as a cost-saving feature. So what *will* the system cost? Kutaragi hints that it will be priced around $400 but that he wants "consumers to think to themselves, 'I will work more hours to buy one.'" If it is priced at $400, Sony will be taking a $100 shot for every PS3 sold, since the unit reportedly costs $500 to manufacture. «

ZOE FLOWER

A PIECE OF CAKE

ZOE FLOWER is a whimsical columnist who loves making chocolate cake and eating half the batter before she bakes it. She is currently designing the innovative game *Ultimate Cake Fighter*, featuring a Kratos vs. Martha Stewart (à la) mode.

OK, so I'm a busy girl at this time of year, and I admit I've been rather disgruntled at how little quality time I've been able to log with my PS2. I could say I'm rationing my *Psychonauts* experience in a similar fashion to how I consume chocolate cake (you know, the agonizingly slow, tiny bites in the hopes it won't ever be finished), but it's just a poor excuse for not finding the time to play consistently. I don't know about you, but when it comes to a compelling character and story line, I find the experience far more rewarding when I can play straight through uninterrupted (analogous to jamming my face with a second piece of chocolate cake when nobody is looking) rather than trying to recall the previous weeks of plotline development or puzzle solving. After all, I'm quite sure I'm getting dumber every year, and recalling the layout of a massive world just doesn't seem like my idea of FUN these days. (Side rant: C'mon, developers! Every game should have a map! Why do you want us to suffer so much just because some of us have an appalling sense of direction?)

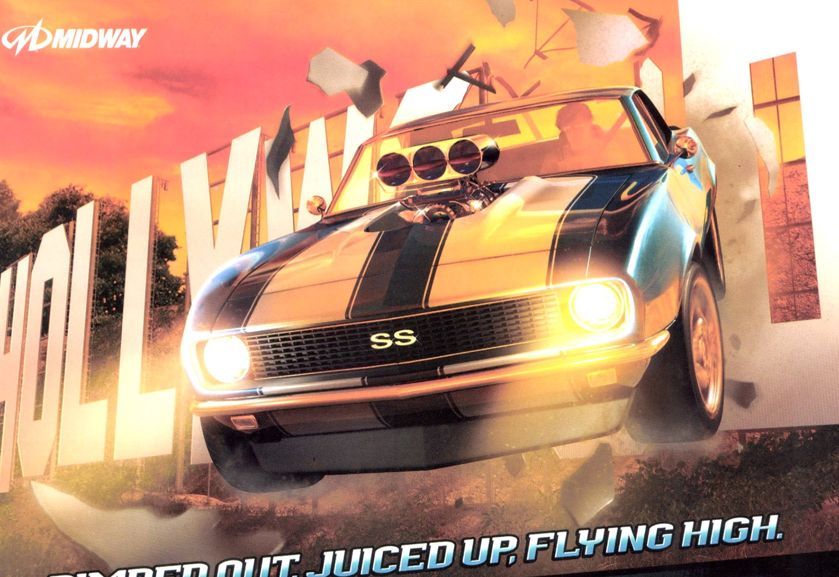
Now back to my main rant. I can't seem to say it enough. *God of War* really did ruin everything for me (it's like yummy, gooey, rich chocolate cake, melt-in-your-mouth perfection that makes everything else taste like sand). As I attempt to squish a few hours of playtime into my week, I want all game experiences to be as intuitive, responsive, and just plain ass-kicking FUN.

This became apparent at E3 this year. I have always been a huge proponent of art-house styling in games. I demand to see creativity blossom and an industry that nurtures innovation! So I've been riddled with guilt since playing Clover Studio's *Okami* and feeling slightly underwhelmed (that cake looks mouthwatering but tastes just OK). Combine that with my colossal disappointment in *Shadow of the Colossus* (cake that I wanted to throw at someone in anger), and I find myself losing faith. Indeed, I must confess, while *Okami* stunned my senses with its painterly style and *Shadow* took my breath away with its mythical creatures, they just weren't FUN enough! As soon as the control scheme or camera begin to baffle me—which they did in both of these games—I start to remember that I have laundry to do, or a show to produce, or a bike to ride, or another game to try. And this is coming from someone who has a high pain tolerance (from years of falling down stairs and/or reviewing bad games), a sympathetic soul, plus an ulterior motive to prove to the world that innovation is the key to the game industry's success!

I WANT ALL GAME EXPERIENCES TO BE ASS-KICKING FUN.

With very few prospects on the horizon that offer a compelling gameplay experience other than strangling myself with the controller cord, I might have to spend my summer binging on more chocolate cake in the hopes of discovering the perfect balance of gameplay and visual style. When it comes to innovation and FUN in the same experience, apparently we can't yet have our cake and eat it, too. «

MIDWAY



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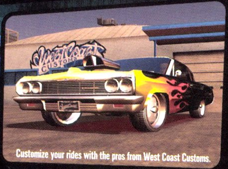
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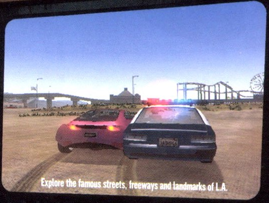
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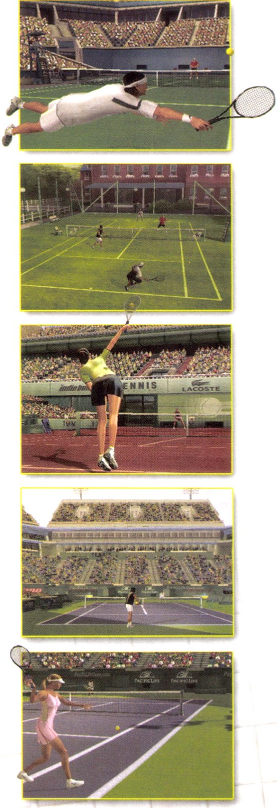

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FALL FRENZY

YOUR GUIDE TO PRACTICALLY EVERY PS2 AND PSP GAME SHIPPING IN THE REST OF 2005

ILLUSTRATION BY: NATE VAN DYKE

For all we know you're reading this in your birthday suit, trying to escape yet another day of record high temperatures. But for *OPM*, the leaves are turning gold, there's a growing chill in the air, and the holidays are just around the corner. And just for you, we've compiled a whopping 169 games that are scheduled to hit store shelves in the months of September, October, and November. Our giant fall preview is as comprehensive as it can be—games and their release dates were culled from publishers (primarily at E3) and retail sites on the Web—but don't hold us responsible if your favorite game is either not listed or slips a month or two. OK, go ahead and blame Scooter.

CHIMP
CHAINSAW
MASSACRE
N8 '05
VAN DYKE

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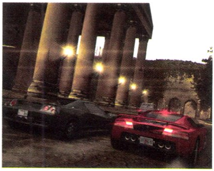


BURNOUT REVENGE

TAKE US DOWN, BABY

Normally, when you walk by the *OPM* offices in the last days before we send the magazine to the printer, a frantic quiet hangs over the area. That silence got broken this month, and it was all because we'd received a new build of *Burnout Revenge*. Picture 12 people crammed into a cube while they passed a controller around, their mouths alternating between slack-jawed and cheering, and you've got a good idea of what this game has in store.

The new mode that debuts in *Revenge* is called traffic attack. Imagine a fusion of crash mode and road rage, and you'll begin to understand how it works. You start at the beginning of the course with a timer (for the two courses we played, the starting time was set at 90 seconds), and the goal is to take out as much traffic during that time as possible. You can hit the ends of vehicles in intersections, and you can bump them from the rear, but you have to avoid all buses, trucks, and oncoming traffic, otherwise you'll get taken out. Each vehicle or object that you mow down causes a certain amount of damage, and the more damage you cause, the more seconds you put back on the timer. Theoretically, we suppose it would be possible to continue playing a single round forever. Alex Ward, Criterion's creative director, explains, "This time it's not just about crossing the finish line first, but rather punishing your rivals and getting back at those who have tried to take you down. A revenge meter tracks all of your underhanded tactics and is the key to unlocking the game."

A lot of features in the *Burnout* series are actually modeled after sports, as Ward shared with us. "In *Takedown*, crash mode was modeled after bowling. In *Revenge*, we looked to golf for inspiration. Crash junctions now feature different approach routes, are littered with lots of nasty 'bunkers,' and feature a moving target car on the 'green.'" And the whole concept of checking traffic (as the team calls the ability to hit cars from the rear) was inspired by ice hockey.

One of the things we love about *Burnout 3* is that it is immediately accessible but infinitely replayable. Figuring out strategies for crash junctions, striving to get one more takedown in road rage, trying to get the gold medal in that last race—it all adds up to hours upon hours of enjoyment. And this time, there's even more for you to experiment with: Tracks are multilayered, there are shortcuts to discover, the speed zips along faster, and there are tons more crash-breakers. On top of all that, the game looks amazing—so good that it's better than most of the Xbox 360 footage that's been shown. We gave *Burnout 3* our Game of the Year award last year, but after we got this demo, we kicked *Burnout 3* to the curb and are making our moves on *Revenge*.

Pub. EA Games **Dev.** Criterion

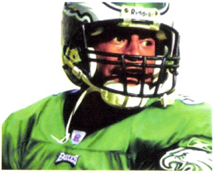
SHADOW OF THE COLOSSUS

IT'S DEFINITELY NOT ICO

After more hands-on time with *Shadow of the Colossus*, we're getting a bit nervous. Don't get us wrong: The game is beautiful, and the idea of hunting building-sized beasts is fascinating. It's the controls that give us pause. Where *Ico* boasted a simple, intuitive control system, *Colossus*' is noticeably more complex. Things as simple as directing your horse have a noticeable learning curve, and working your way up one of the enormous colossi takes plenty of trial and error—you are, after all, maneuvering on a moving surface that's actively trying to dislodge you.

Even so, it's hard not to be excited about *Colossus* for two simple reasons: 1) It's by the designers of *Ico*, and 2) it's unlike any other game out there. There's still time for the developers to tweak the controls, so we're going to stay positive until we get our hands on our exclusive review copy next month.

Pub. Sony CEA Dev. Sony CEI



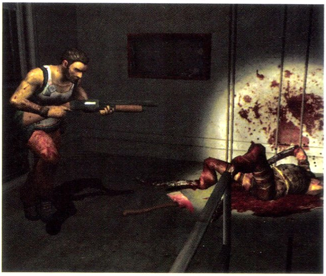
MADDEN PSP

PORTABLE LINEBACKERS

While the portable version of *Madden* lacks some of the features of its console friend, it still has all of the classic *Madden* gameplay. All of the motion in the game is still based on momentum, so you can't really turn on a dime if you're charging full speed down the field, but you still have a small assortment of jukes and spin moves to help you evade the defense. Of course, you won't have access to a second analog stick, so features that use it will either be cut or adjusted for the PSP's control scheme.

We had a chance to play the game back at E3, and while it was early, it's obvious that EA Sports is looking to deliver the core of what makes *Madden* so entertaining to millions of people. It will have the standard assortment of modes, including online multiplayer as well as a franchise mode. Actually, EA currently has plans to let you bring your franchise file from the PS2 version of *Madden* to the PSP, so you can keep playing through the season while you're out on the town.

Pub. EA Sports Dev. Tiburon



THE SUFFERING: TIES THAT BIND

BALTIMORE CAN'T POSSIBLY BE THIS BAD

"Hey, you got your shooter in my survival-horror game!" That's right, the two great tastes that taste great together are returning in an all-new morality play loaded with creepy atmosphere, branching story lines, and really, really f***ed-up monsters.

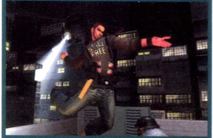
Beginning just moments after the first *Suffering*, *Ties That Bind* is set on the mean streets of Baltimore—which appears to have suffered a dimensional instability similar to that of the prison in the first game, as it's become overrun with vile creatures drawn from the city's darkest past.

Where the first game's monsters were manifestations of forms of legal execution, *Ties That Bind*'s creepy crawlies are embodiments of street violence: One creature sports a gang's share of pistols; another is stuck with enough needles to keep the junkie population of a medium-sized town going for weeks.

The first game, while loaded with potential, was somewhat poorly executed; let's hope Surreal has learned a thing or two from the experience and applied that knowledge to this sequel.

Pub. Midway Dev. Surreal

MORE SEPTEMBER



PS2

MARC ECKO'S GETTING UP

Ready your paint cans: We've reached the release of *Marc Ecko's Getting Up: Contents Under Pressure*, a sprawling urban action game that advocates the use of graffiti as protest. If nothing else, *Getting Up* will teach you all about how graffiti artists manage to get themselves up high enough to paint those highway overpass signs.

INDIGO PROPHECY

Formerly known as *Fahrenheit*, *Indigo Prophecy* is Atari's attempt to revive the French adventure-game genre. The story is some bizarre yarn about how you totally kill some random dude in a fit of demonic possession, and you're now trying to figure out why it is that other people are randomly killing the same way you did. The good news: It looks better than most pointless European point-and-click titles.

S.L.A.I.: STEEL LANCER ARENA INT'L

Metal scraping against metal, thousands of customization configurations and machinery upgrades—no, it's not another racer: It's Konami's mech battlefest *S.L.A.I.: Steel Lancer Arena International*. In addition to the single-player campaign, you'll also be able to take your mech online and battle with up to six friends at a time in locations such as Cairo, New York, and Hong Kong.

RADIATA STORIES

From the creators of *Star Ocean* comes a new RPG, *Radiata Stories*. As Jack Russell (who's not a dog), you'll adventure your way through a medieval world in your dual quest of becoming a knight and (of course) saving the world. A lot of the game looks awesome, but one thing we're not looking forward to are the game's timed events, in which you're arbitrarily stuck waiting around for a character to return to the appointed meeting place. That's not our idea of fun.

GENJI: DAWN OF THE SAMURAI

It may seem like another *Dynasty Warriors* rip-off, but *Genji: Dawn of the Samurai* was directed by Yoshiki Okamoto, he of *Street Fighter II* fame—which is why our expectations are high for this samurai action game.

FINAL FANTASY VII: ADVENT CHILDREN

THE REAL FINAL FANTASY MOVIE?

No, it's not a game, but just about every single fan of the *Final Fantasy* series is eagerly awaiting the CG film depicting the events that transpire after the closing moments of *Final Fantasy VII*. The latest trailer shows an epic battle against an enormous beast in the streets of Midgard, where Red XIII, Cid, Vincent, Barret, and Yuffie leap into action. Meanwhile, Cloud's busy fighting some new enemies, and we get the first glimpse of Sephiroth outside of the flashback scene.

All of this action required a tremendous amount of time and effort from Tetsuya Nomura, director of *Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children*, and his team of animators and CG artists. In fact, the team has put so much effort into making *Advent Children* look as good as possible that they've even hand animated the fighting scenes. "Every frame of animation for those fights is done by hand [thanks to Takeshi Nozue, codirector]. There is no motion capture involved at all during the battle scenes," says Nomura. "You can't really talk about a feature film without talking about motion capture or any computer-generated scenes. It's not really about how much motion capture was done for the movie. I mean, if you really wanted to, you can say, 'This number of motion captures was used for the scene.' Except, anyone can do that if you have time. Now, I'm not saying *AC* didn't have any mo-cap, as it did, but we still went back and touched up a lot of the mo-cap so that it didn't look all the same."

Obviously, this isn't the first time Square Enix has produced a CG movie with *Final Fantasy* in the name. *Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within*, while technically astounding, was a commercial flop. Some said it was because the movie strayed away from what made the games so popular, while others believed that the characters were so realistic that they were just too creepy looking. In any case, Square Enix seems to have learned from its initial attempt at CG filmmaking, and Nomura doesn't seem at all concerned with the past haunting *Advent Children*. "I was actually asked to come out to Honolulu and draw some of the main characters. So I did, but while I was out there, I realized that my own direction and the direction of the moviemakers were very different, and I decided at that time not to take part in the movie project," Nomura adds. "Obviously, it's been a number of years since *The Spirits Within* came out. In general, there have been lots of advances, not just in what our company does, but in what everyone else does. With *Advent Children*, we do not keep in mind what we've done before. We're not trying to disassociate ourselves, because it is a part of the *Final Fantasy* family, but there's no real comparison, and we're not very conscious of what kinds of techniques they used at the time."

Pub. Square Enix **Dev.** Square Enix

SEPTEMBER

TOTAL OVERDOSE

Pretend that Robert Rodriguez (the director of *Sin City*) made *Max Payne*, and that should give you have a good idea of what *Total Overdose*, a zany, over-the-top third-person shooter, is looking like.

ONE PIECE GRAND BATTLE

Do you love anime about lovable, wacky pirates? Then buy *One Piece Grand Battle*! What better way to portray the awesome fighting abilities of pirates than with a good ol' fighting game? Especially when this new installment is filled with even more characters and attacks than the original game had.

COMMANDOS: STRIKE FORCE

The WWII-based *Commandos* series has built a powerful rep among real-time strategy aficionados with its deep tactical gameplay, innovatively combining stealth, action, and puzzle solving. So it seems counterproductive to change to first-person action, which is the case with *Commandos: Strike Force*. Hey, the Westwood guys made this sort of shift with *Command & Conquer: Renegade*, and look where that got them. Right: gone.

SPARTAN: TOTAL WARRIOR

Creative Assembly, known heretofore as a developer of straight-up PC strategy games, is breaking out of the mold with *Spartan: Total Warrior* for Sega. You'd not be wrong to liken the game to a Greco-Roman *Dynasty Warriors*, only you should expect more strategy, more cinematic verve, and even more moving bodies onscreen.

DDR EXTREME 2

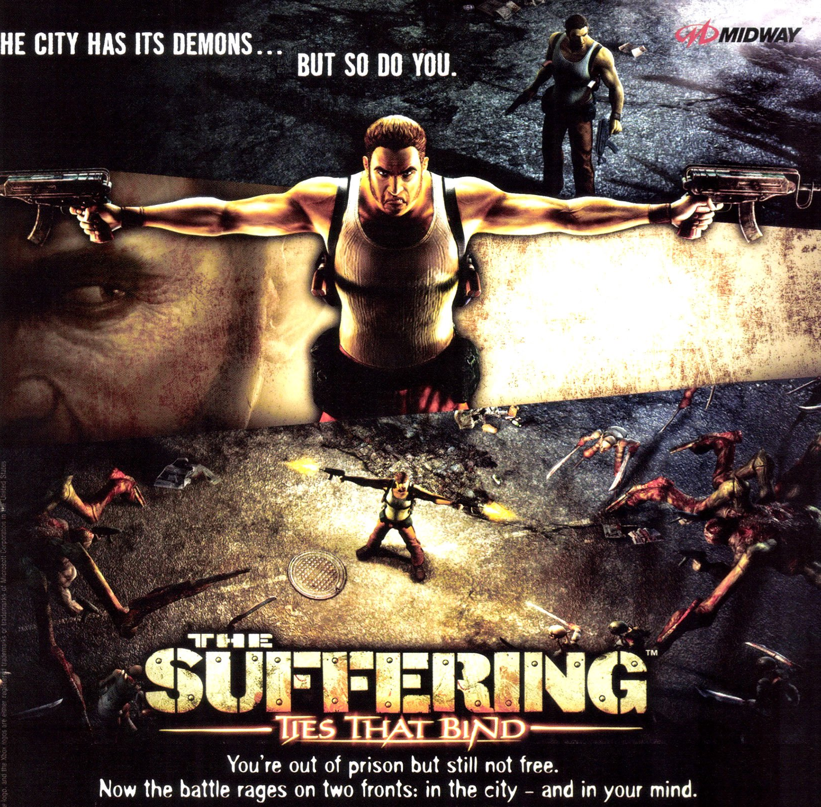
The latest iteration in the series that has become gaming nerds' favorite workout, *DDR Extreme 2* is returning with all the standard modes and the EyeToy support introduced last year. What's new this time around? Online support, which will be appearing for the first time on PS2.

EYETOY: KINETIC

If you have a hard time keeping the beat but still want to get fit with your PS2, then *EyeToy: Kinetic* might be more your speed. Use it to build your own custom fitness workout; the game can then help you track your progress over the span of 12 weeks.

GRETZKY NHL 2006

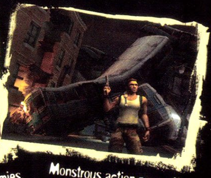
Since Wayne Gretzky has been retired for quite some time, you might not think that he would be a factor in Sony's hockey game. You'd be wrong, though—the company has to somehow justify still calling it *Gretzky NHL*! The development team has



You're out of prison but still not free.
Now the battle rages on two fronts: in the city – and in your mind.

Discover the dark secrets of the inner city.

Fight teeming hordes of nightmarish enemies.


Monstrous action pays off... with your survival.

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RATING PENDING
RP
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Visit www.esrb.org for updated rating information.

XBOX

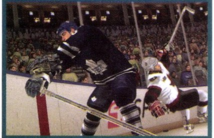
XBOX LIVE ONLINE ENABLED

www.sufferingtiesthatbind.com

SURREAL

PlayStation.2

added an arcade-style Wayne vs. Wayne mode in which you can activate Wayne Gretzky for a brief period of time for 6-on-5 action. The new team chemistry feature also rewards good teamwork.



NHL 2K6

Even though the NHL has been on hiatus, you can still enjoy the on-ice action with *NHL 2K6*, which features an all-new on-the-fly coaching mode that lets you make split-second decisions for your team depending on the situation. As always with the *2K* games, you can also expect a robust franchise mode and full-season online play.

BACKYARD FOOTBALL

Making its first appearance on the PS2, *Backyard Football* offers a cartoon version of football, complete with goofy power-ups. It's not in the same league as *Madden*, but Atari's long-running series is usually a safe bet for younger fans.

SNOCROSS 2: FEATURING BLAIR MORGAN

Many of you out there may not even have been aware that there was an original *SnoCross*. Well, there was, and sequel *SnoCross 2: Featuring Blair Morgan* (which, uh, features "celebrity" snowmobiler Blair Morgan) brings players even more trick-based snowmobile action.

CABELA'S OUTDOOR ADVENTURE

What better way to spend an afternoon than with guns and deer urine? If you can't answer that question, then *Cabela's Outdoor Adventure* is probably just the game for you.

ROMANCING SAGA

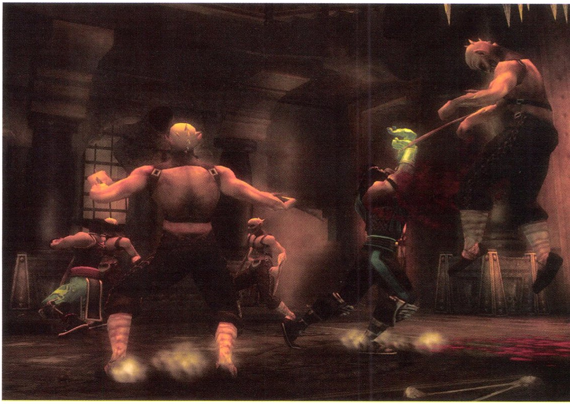
Square Enix proves that there is an audience for everything, as there is yet another installment of the *SaGa* franchise, *Romancing SaGa*. This latest entry will be more like a normal game. Characters can move! There will be a somewhat normal battle system! Maybe Akitoshi Kawazu did, indeed, learn from the mistake that is *Unlimited SaGa*.

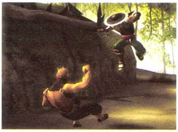
CALL OF CTHULHU

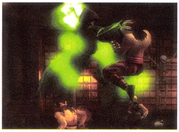
Call of Cthulhu: Dark Corners of the Earth has been in development for a long time (this last May marked its third consecutive E3 appearance), but this FPS based on the written work of sci-fi author HP Lovecraft might offer some surprises.

WORLD POKER TOUR 2K6

For those who are too afraid (or too smart) to put their actual money on the line, 2K Sports' officially licensed *World Poker Tour 2K6* will allow players to







MORTAL KOMBAT: SHAOLIN MONKS

THE TOUGHEST MONKS YOU'LL EVER MEET

Shaolin Monks isn't your typical *Mortal Kombat* fighting game. The 1-on-1 combat has been replaced with straight-up brawling, which is set against the backdrop of famous *Mortal Kombat* locations on both Earth and Outworld. The story takes place shortly after the events of the first game, when Shang Tsung is forced to flee back to Outworld because of his failure in the Mortal Kombat tournament. Liu Kang and Kung Lao pursue Tsung with the guidance of Raiden, an all-around helpful character who can shoot lightning out of his eyeballs and give you hints at the beginning of the game.

The first portion of the demo on this month's disc takes place in Goro's lair and gives you a chance to test out the basic fighting mechanics in *Shaolin Monks*. You have access to quick attacks, power attacks, throws, and launch attacks. Each of these moves can be used with another to perform devastating combinations, but you'll have to get the timing down for some moves in order to use them effectively.

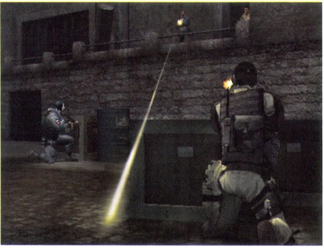
As you progress further, you'll find that there are other sorts of attacks at your disposal as well, including special attacks that are basically Liu Kang's and Kung Lao's special attacks from the *Mortal Kombat* fighting games. In addition, you'll learn how to perform a fatality, which results in an instant kill of the enemy you're fighting against, but you have to remember the combination to execute it because it won't always be displayed for you. Also, make sure to pay special attention to your environments. Much like in other *Mortal Kombat* games, you can perform environmental fatalities on enemies. In fact, one of the early sections in the demo is from the bridge level of the original *Mortal Kombat*, so try knocking foes off the bridge onto the spikes below.

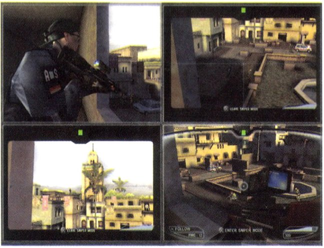
If you've already gone through the demo once by yourself, try playing it again with a friend for some co-op action. It adds a little more intensity to what is already a fast-paced and brutal beat-em-up set in the *Mortal Kombat* universe.

Pub. Midway **Dev.** Paradox

THE CHOPS

Paradox has lots of fighter experience, from *X-Men: Mutant Academy* to *Backyard Wrestling 2*. Trouble is, none of the company's games have been very good. However, the studio's logo is a *pair of ducks*, which just cannot be beat.





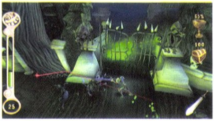
RAINBOW SIX: LOCKDOWN

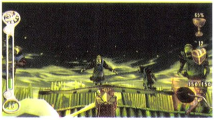
SNIPER HUNTING

As battle-hardened as Team Rainbow might be, it did get stuck with a rather unfortunate name. Perhaps that's what prompted the attack against this elite counterterrorism unit, which serves as the driving force behind *Lockdown*'s story line. Whatever the case, you'll step into the shoes of Team Rainbow once again for more tense, close-quarters tactical combat. In addition to the expected array of new weapons and equipment, *Lockdown* offers a dual-perspective single-player campaign, which you'll see through the eyes of Team Rainbow's fearless leader as well as its unremitting sniper, an expert marksman who always gets his man.

The PS2 and Xbox versions of *Lockdown* each feature an exclusive multiplayer experience. PS2 players get the all-new objective-driven rivalry mode, which will pit the Team Rainbow members against a deadly squad of mercs for an exciting team-based competition. If *Lockdown* hits all the same notes as *Rainbow Six 3*, then tactical combat aficionados could be in for another deeply immersive strategic experience.

Pub. Ubisoft Dev. Red Storm Entertainment





MEDIEVIL RESURRECTION

LIKE CAMELOT, BUT UNDEAD

The *MediEvil* series was quite well received on the original PlayStation, which was what made the absence of any PS2 installments somewhat bizarre. Well, Sony's cheeky third-person action-adventure series is finally getting resurrected for the PSP, once again bringing the undead hero of Gallowmere, Sir Daniel Fortesque, back from the grave to fend off evil wizards and the like. For the most part, *MediEvil Resurrection* is a standard-issue hack-n-slash, with the twist being that aside from a multitude of swords, daggers, clubs, and arrows at his disposal, Sir Dan can use parts of his zombie body as weapons. For instance, he can detach his arm and swing it in melee combat or throw it boomerang style for a ranged attack. Zombie enemies, *Monty Python*–esque humor, and minigames like Pit o' Death, Whack a Zarok, and Trebuchet o' Terror promise an undeadly fun time.

Pub. Sony CEA Dev. Sony CEE

bet fake coin against digitally rendered versions of real-life poker professionals.

TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 06

Messing with a tried-and-true formula can be disastrous (anyone remember New Coke?), which is why you won't be seeing any huge changes to *Tiger Woods PGA Tour 06*. However, one modification you will see is a new putting system.

TOP SPIN

2K Sports' popular Xbox tennis game *Top Spin* will make its way to PS2. Featuring 16 professionals (including Venus Williams, Maria Sharapova, and Roger Federer), the PS2 version will also offer EyeToy support to help you create a digital avatar to take online and pit against other players.

CRASH TAG TEAM RACING

Remember *Crash Team Racing*? Well, you'll get a good idea of the upcoming *Crash Tag Team Racing* if you imagine similar mechanics with the added ability to ram vehicles together to form more powerful vehicles. Fantastic.

URBAN REIGN

Namco sure likes its fighting. The company got members of the *Soul Calibur* and *Tekken* teams to help make *Urban Reign*, a new 3D brawler complete with four-player action and lots of fisticuffs.

FROGGER: ANCIENT SHADOW

No, you're not just crossing the street in the latest entry in Konami's long-lived franchise, *Frogger: Ancient Shadow*—there's also platform jumping and other fairly standard stuff, like collecting.

TY THE TASMANIAN TIGER: NIGHT OF THE QUINKAN

The tiger from Down Under is back; this time Ty's trusty boomerangs are aimed at the quinkans, mythical aboriginal creatures that have invaded his home. In addition to the kart racing of past games, you'll also be able to soar through some missions in flying vehicles called bunyips.

SCOOBY-DOO! UNMASKED

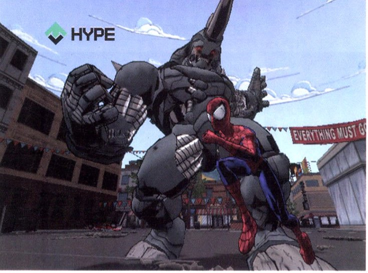
As with any episode of the cartoon it's based on, you can accurately guess what *Scooby-Doo! Unmasked* will feature even before it begins. In this case, you'll get more platforming action set in a silly mystery plot complete with the requisite meddling kids.

MIDWAY ARCADE TREASURES 3

Like *San Francisco Rush 2049* and *Hydro Thunder*, among other arcade driving games? Then look no further than *Midway Arcade Treasures 3*, which also offers crazy games such as *Rush The Rock: Alcatraz Edition, Off Road Thunder, STUN Runner*, and *Badlands*—all on one disc!

CAPCOM CLASSICS COLLECTION

Not wanting to let Midway corner the market on game rereleases, Capcom is releasing its own



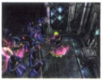
ULTIMATE SPIDER-MAN

FOR THE ULTIMATE GEEK

Ultimate Spider-Man sets out to be a slicker, cel-shaded version of last year's free-roaming *Spider-Man 2* game. That means more free-roaming Spidey action set in a massive map of Manhattan (and now including Parker's hood, Queens). That's good and everything, but what we like most about it so far is the playable Venom, who's bigger, stronger, and funkier-looking than Spider-Man, plus he eats people for health. The game alternates between the two characters until you finish the game, at which point you can choose to play as just Spidey or just Venom.

To the excitement of comic dorks like Scooter, the *Ultimate Spider-Man* game will also feature the debut of Ultimate Beetle, who now wears some sort of Japanese superhero outfit as opposed to the tacky purple-and-green getup that he sported in the '60s, and one other Ultimate character. The second character hasn't been revealed, but we'd like to think it's Ultimate Silver Sable, since Spidey has a mission dealing with Latveria in the game, and she is almost always involved in Latverian high jinks.

Pub. Activision Dev. Treyarch

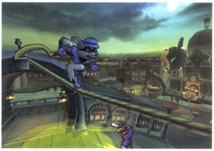


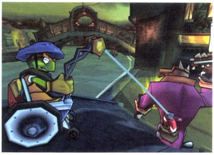
X-MEN LEGENDS II: RISE OF APOCALYPSE

WHERE GOOD AND BAD MEET

While *X-Men Legends* was the first action-RPG to let you play as four cool X-Men, *X-Men Legends II: Rise of Apocalypse* will be the first game that lets you pair up the awesome duo of Juggernaut and Gambit. Or Magneto and Psylocke. Basically, besides being a bigger, better *XML*, this second one will unite heroes and villains alike (the Brotherhood joins the X-Men in the fight against big, bad Apocalypse) and will finally add the awesome prospect of online co-op play. This means you can be Wolverine while your annoying cousin in Nebraska will be forced to play as Toad.

Pub. Activision Dev. Raven





SLY 3: HONOR AMONG THIEVES

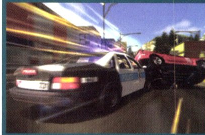
GOOD THINGS COME IN 3D

Superheroes tend to hog the limelight, but for our money, Sly Cooper is one of the best masked heroes around. There's little doubt that Sucker Punch's second follow-up to 2002's critical darling *Sly Cooper and the Thievius Raccoonus* will fall anywhere short of its excellent origins, especially with returning characters Sly the raccoon (of course), Bentley the turtle (in his on-steroids wheelchair), and Murray the hippo. Back also is Sly's whimsical cel-shaded cartoon style and a bevy of challenging action and stealth missions. While the gang is still based out of Paris, you'll be visiting new locales that include Australia (dingoes and 'roos!) and Venice.

The first sequel introduced playable Bentley and playable Murray; this game brings to the mix a playable Carmelita Fox—in fact, when you're playing as her, you'll actually be trying to stop Sly. Now add to this mix biplane sequences and splitscreen co-op and competitive levels, and, well, let's just say Sly is looking slyer already. Super triple bonus: 3D glasses will be included in every *Sly 3* package to be worn during certain levels. Put 'em on and be ready to duck.

Pub. Sony CEA Dev. Sucker Punch

compilation, *Capcom Classics Collection*. If you miss the days in the arcade with *Commando*, *Bionic Commando*, *Ghosts 'n Goblins*, *Final Fight*, and *1942*, plus 17 others, start saving your quarters.



PSP

Burnout Legends

While it's a bit maddening that most of the good PSP games so far have been car-based, that doesn't make us any less excited about *Burnout Legends*, especially when we think of all the modes (crash, road rage, pursuit, and more) the team has managed to pack onto a single UMD. Now we're just crossing our fingers that the load times don't crash our PSPs' batteries....

Frantix

Frantix is a puzzle game built around the simple premise of getting from point A to point B. Of course, it's never a smooth journey, and you'll be dodging monsters, avoiding pits, and plotting your way through each level. The frantic part comes in as you race to beat the clock.

GripShift

While *GripShift* does put you behind the driver's wheel, it's as much a puzzle game as it is a driving game. Though one of the challenges is hitting the finish line, part of the struggle is just staying on the tracks, which are suspended in midair. There's a collection element too, as you'll be trying to gather pickups scattered throughout the courses.

Tiger Woods PGA Tour 06

It's only been a few months since *Tiger 2005* came out, which means *Tiger Woods PGA Tour 06* doesn't look a whole lot different than its predecessor. One tweak we hope the team concentrates on, though, is working on optimizing the PSP even more to shorten up those loading times.

World Poker Tour 2K6

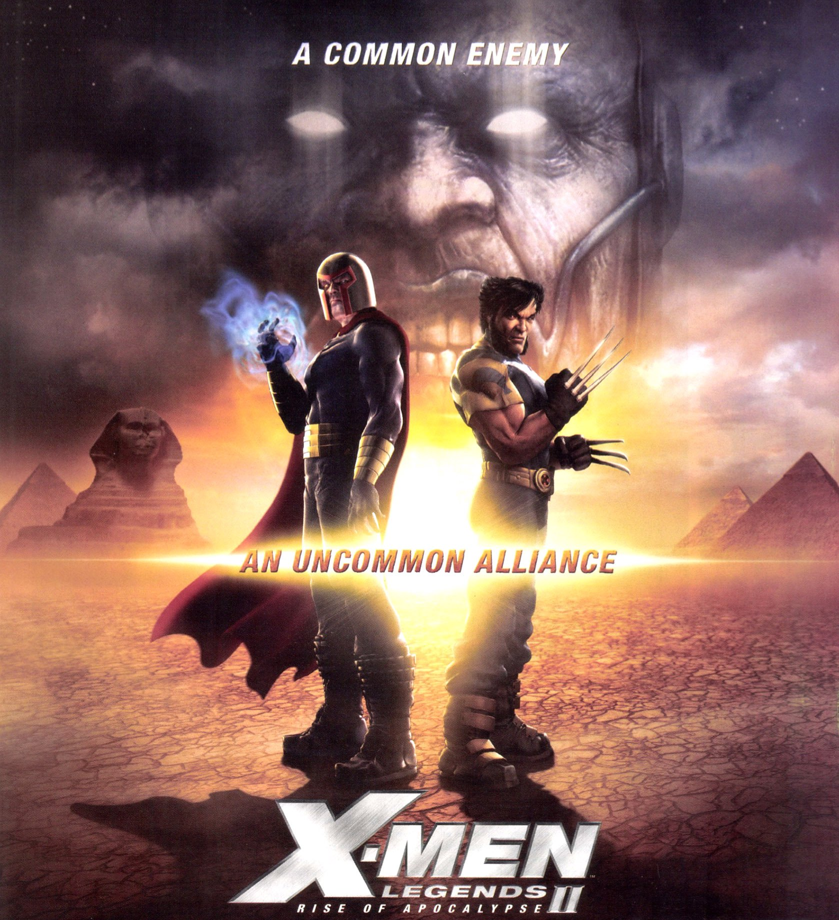
Shuffle up and deal! 2K Sports is keeping details on *World Poker Tour 2K6* fairly quiet, but the idea of getting our hold 'em fix on the go pushes all the right buttons. Expect an infinite variety of games with the rules editor, online play, and hand-by-hand commentary.

Frogger: Helmet Chaos

The little green frog that could may not seem all that relevant these days, but that's not stopping Konami from publishing yet another game based on *Frogger*. *Helmet Chaos* features 3D environments mixed with typical 2D *Frogger*-style gameplay; the arcade original is an unlockable bonus.

Namco Museum Battle Collection

Classic collections aren't anything new, but classic collections with support for Wi-Fi head-to-head and co-op modes are. *Namco Museum Battle Collection* features dozens of arcade classics, including *Pac-Man*, *Dig Dug*, *Xevious*, and *Galaga*. Some of them have even been slightly upgraded to look slicker on your PSP.



X-Men-Legends2.com

September 2005

RATING PENDING
RP
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Visit www.esrb.org for updated rating information.

This title is available for the PlayStation® 2 computer entertainment system and PSP™ (PlayStation® Portable) system.

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RAVEN

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MARVEL

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ACTIVISION.

activision.com

CALL OF DUTY 2: BIG RED ONE

TOUR EUROPE FOR 50 BUCKS

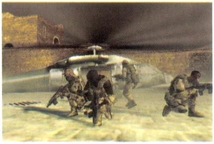
For those of you who just want a good, old-fashioned World War II first-person shooter, well, here you go. Don't think *Call of Duty 2: Big Red One* is just another quick-rush sequel in which all the developers did was change the colors of the levels: There are quite a few changes in store for this installment of the franchise.

Previous *Call of Duty* titles, for both PC and consoles, have always focused on the "no one soldier won the war" idea, and as a result, you played multiple characters to help give you a bigger picture as to what was going on. For *Big Red One*, however, you play as just one soldier. That soldier happens to be a part of the Big Red One, a unit within the famed 1st Infantry Division. Everywhere they go, he goes, and so will you.

You'll be touring around North Africa, Italy, and big chunks of Nazi-occupied Europe (particularly France, Belgium, and even Germany itself). You'll be liberating Belgian villages, dodging Axis plane attacks, and perhaps hopping on a German boat or two. One of the missions is a sneaky night assault on a Sicilian shoreline (the opening of Operation Husky, for you WWII aficionados). You're one of the boat's passengers, and you need to shoot down the mines in the water so that the boat doesn't get detected. What's interesting about this sequence is that the number of mines you blow up determines how many men survive the trip, which in turn affects the difficulty of the overall mission. As you play through this mission, you'll notice that *Big Red One* is the first WWII game to feature fine Italian weapons (fans of other WWII arms will be pleased to know that there is still a boatload of authentic American, French, and German guns to play with).

There will also be better use of squads—don't get us wrong, we don't think the game suddenly becomes *Rainbow Six* with Nazis, but the other soldiers you fight alongside will have better AI, use more realistic tactics, and even use cover in a more efficient fashion. Heck, since you have a radio, you'll be hearing them jabber amongst each other about what's going on, which really helps enhance the immersion factor. Of course, once you get sick of playing with virtual soldiers, you can always hop onto the wild world of the Internet and play some online multiplayer.

Pub. Activision Dev. Treyarch



SOCOM 3: U.S. NAVY SEALS

CONTROL FREAKS

If you've been following the progress of *SOCOM 3* thus far, you already know about its support for 32 players online. You know about the vehicles. You know about the huge maps, and you know about the "crosstalk" objectives that sync data between the PS2 game and the PSP game, *Fireteam Bravo*.

But did you know that, in addition to all these huge changes, Zipper is making a host of smaller changes that haven't gotten as much attention? Take, for example, the redesign of the Team Command menu. Sure, the quintessential *SOCOM* experience includes using a headset to issue voice commands, but for those of you who prefer to go the menu route, the TCM has been completely rearranged in a circular layout, offering instant access to all those crucial commands.

Furthermore, a context-sensitive "team command action" lets you direct your teammates in single-player mode with a single button. And you'd be surprised what a difference this makes; now, instead of plodding through a menu or saying "Team, move to crosshairs" into the headset, you can just tap a button and your bravo team will breach a door, adjust their positions, or do whatever the situation calls for.

Sometimes, it's the little things that show how much a developer cares about its fans.

Pub. Sony CEA **Dev.** Zipper Interactive

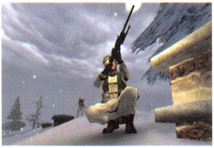
BROTHERS IN ARMS: EARNED IN BLOOD

SOLDIERING AWAY TOGETHER

Remember how in the last *Brothers in Arms* you commanded a bunch of dudes, and one of them was Sgt. Hartsock, your assault team leader? That's who you'll be playing as this time. Don't think that the whole game is a retread of the previous title, *Road to Hill 30*; the end of the last game overlaps a little with the beginning of this one. While *Road to Hill 30* focused on establishing a presence in Normandy, this game will focus on securing and liberating the rest of the region. Expect harder missions, snazzier graphics, and more urban combat.

The best new feature is the cooperative campaign, which Gearbox wanted to put into the previous game but didn't have time to do. Now you and your buddy can rummage through the wreckage of the French countryside and tactically ambush the Germans. The other interesting aspect of co-op is the option to actually play as the Germans. Yes, indeed, you can fight for the Wehrmacht. Not since *TIE Fighter* on the PC has a developer really tried to portray an enemy as a true, playable option, so we'll see how this option gets received.

Pub. Ubisoft **Dev.** Gearbox



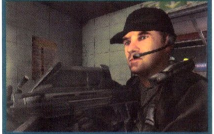
AMERICA'S ARMY

EASIER THAN INVADING IRAQ

The U.S. Army is doing its darnedest to enlist new recruits, but those who don't have the stomach for the real battlefield will be able to virtually join the armed forces with *America's Army: Rise of a Soldier*. Build up your soldier in the offline career mode, or go online to test your soldierly merit against others.

Pub. Ubisoft **Dev.** Secret Level

MORE OCTOBER



PS2

CONFLICT: GLOBAL TERROR

It's been to Baghdad (twice) and Vietnam. Now the *Conflict* squad-based series—never afraid of controversy—is set to stop a white-supremacist terrorist group intent on global domination in the aptly named *Conflict: Global Terror*.

BULLY

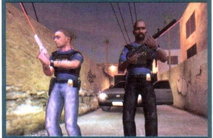
Think of it as *GTA Jr.*: *Bully* puts you in the role of misunderstood 15-year-old Jimmy Hawkins, who has just wound up at Bullworth Academy after bouncing around several schools. Through a series of *GTA*-like missions and actions, including administering a swirly to get information out of a fellow student and being harassed by teachers, Jimmy must make it through the entire school year without being kicked out. Bully for him.

AEON FLUX

From the makers of *BloodRayne* comes *Aeon Flux*, a third-person stealth-action game based on the upcoming movie based on MTV's cultish silent animation series from the '90s. Our fave thing about it: Charlize Theron is the movie's lead. Scha-wiiing!

THE WARRIORS

Inspired by the 1979 cult favorite film about fictional New York street gangs, *The Warriors* is a tried-and-true bash-em-up group brawler, complete with melee combos and broken-glass knives as you guide the beleaguered Warriors back to their home turf of Coney Island. It's *Gauntlet* but totally street.

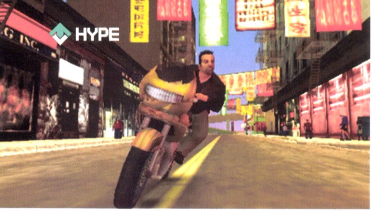


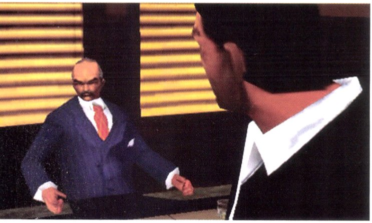
25 TO LIFE

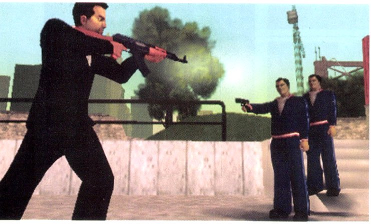
Those who like their games with a side of controversy might prefer *25 to Life*. The in-game ability to choose to side with the police or with the gangs has already sent the mainstream press and U.S. senators into fits of righteous outrage.

NEOPETS: THE DARKEST FAERIE

Neopets: The Darkest Faerie spans 1,000 years of Neopian history. (If that means nothing to you, go check with the nearest 8-year-old.) You'll quest your way through huge dungeons, forests, palaces, and ghostly ruins with the ultimate goal of beating the evil Dark Faerie and her minions. To tie







GTA: LIBERTY CITY STORIES

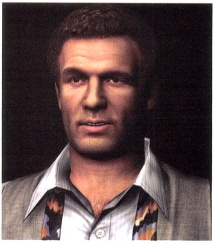
ONCE UPON A CRIME

The game industry is often critiqued for its shallow story lines. And that critique only serves to help the *Grand Theft Auto* series stand apart: The way the plots from the games are intricately woven is nothing short of impressive. Toni Cipriani, the protagonist for the PSP-exclusive *Liberty City Stories*, was introduced back in *GTA3*, but this latest game should provide a lot more insight into who he is.

So, what do we know so far about Toni? Well, according to Rockstar, Mr. Cipriani is a man with a temper, but he has his soft side, too. He's very devoted to his mother (and her restaurant, fittingly named Momma's Restaurant) and loves eating her ziti and veal. But don't criticize Toni's momma's cooking—he's been known to crack heads together if anyone doesn't agree with his opinion that her food is the best around.

In these new screens, you can see Toni using up all the energy he gets from that home cooking as he wields weapons, races around town, and blows up anything that gets in his way.

Pub. Rockstar **Dev.** Rockstar Leeds



THE GODFATHER

SONNY-SIDE UP

It's one of the many big-budget games coming out in the fall, and many would consider it to be EA's answer to the *Grand Theft Auto* series, but how do you handle a beloved film license like *The Godfather*? Well, you can start out by using the voices of many of the same actors from the film, including Marlon Brando, Robert Duvall, and James Caan, who is reprising his role as Sonny Corleone. "EA is not a popcorn operation, and I had to know it was going to be classy. There was no reason not to do it. I've done one voiceover in my life, but I just like the idea that the kids can play with me even after I don't feel like playing or I'm not capable of playing," says Caan. "There's something nice about being in this medium."

Revisiting a character that's over 30 years old wasn't a problem for Caan, who jumped into the booth and started delivering lines similar to those he uttered long ago. "It's Sonny. It's me. It's not like I had to study a New York accent," says Caan. "I just have to bring out the worst of me again. These guys try to bring back what I've tried to get rid of all these years. I wish I was a little smarter. If I knew it was going to be such a hit, I would've never driven through that tollbooth."

Pub. EA Games **Dev.** EA Redwood Shores

OCTOBER

in specifically with the Neopets site—where members can raise and nurture their own virtual pets—the game will include a Petpet power-up system, allowing your very own Petpet to follow you and help you beat levels.

THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS

Fans of *The Nightmare Before Christmas* film may be a little disappointed that they're getting a sequel in the videogame medium, but they'll be happy to know that *Oogie's Revenge* remains true to Tim Burton's vision—except for Jack Skellington's ectoplasm weapon and the fact that he can turn into the Santa Claus version of himself for a whole different set of attacks.

DISNEY'S CHICKEN LITTLE

Like Chicken Little and the sky, we saw the game based on the upcoming *Chicken Little* movie coming. Unlike Chicken Little and the sky, everyone believed us.

24: THE GAME

Ever wondered what the heck happened between seasons two and three of *24*? Play *24: The Game* from 2K Games to find out! There's a whole lot of third-person shooting, a little bit of driving, a few minigames, and a heaping helping of Kiefer Sutherland yelling when you play the interrogation minigame.

JAWS UNLEASHED

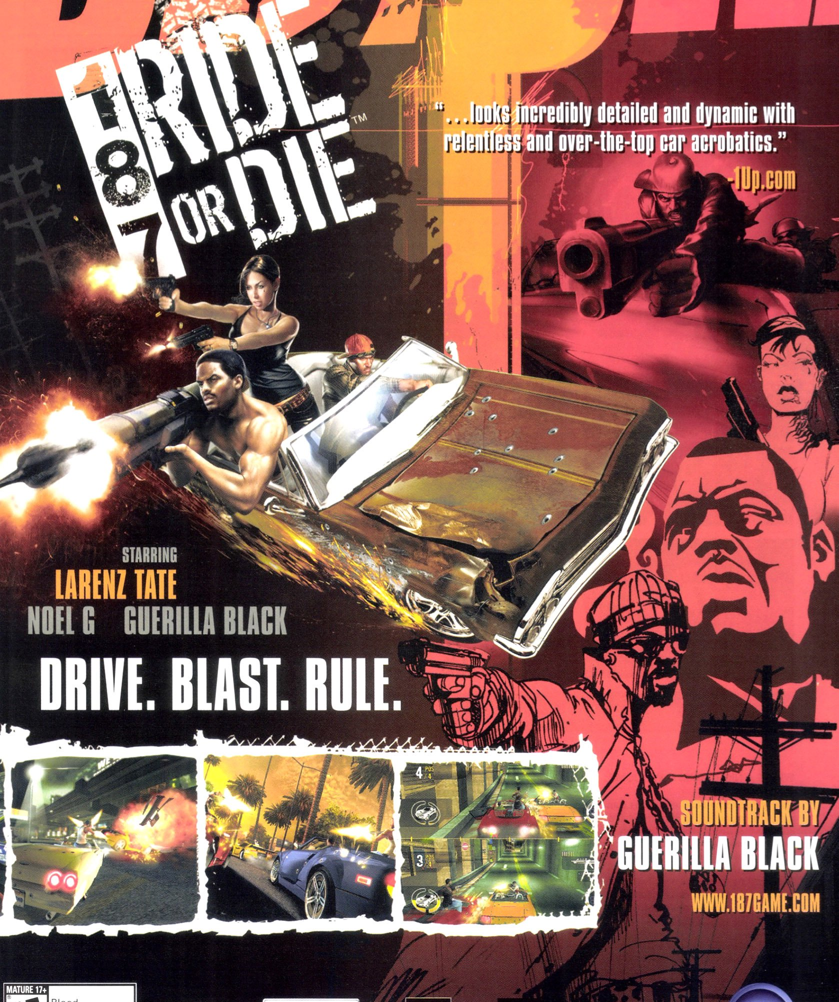
Jaws Unleashed puts you in the role of a hungry shark taking on all life-forms that cross your path. See those lifeguards hanging out in the water? Chomp them in half. Random surfer gets in your way? Take him out. This game sounds perfect for those days when all of humanity becomes absolutely intolerable.

ED, EDD N EDDY

Hey Midway, we're happy you're making a game out of Cartoon Network's popular three nutty boys from *Ed, Edd n Eddy*. We just hope it doesn't end up being like one of Eddy's infamous schemes—you know, harebrained.

COWBOY BEBOP

We're a little worried about *Cowboy Bebop*—the last time we heard anything about this game was during E3 of 2004, when it looked like a solid cel-shaded third-person action game with you fighting bad dudes as either Spike, Jet, or Faye. Then there was a quiet and ominous announcement of its delay—and absolutely no comment at all since.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SOUL CALIBUR III

WHERE A NIGHTMARE IS WELCOME

New games in the *Soul* series don't come around all that often, so it's somewhat of a surprise that *Soul Calibur III* is already on the way, but don't worry. It's not just a minimal update of the features found in *Soul Calibur II*—quite the opposite. Not only have the main fighting mechanics been fixed in the basic single and multiplayer modes, but there are also a ton of new features never before seen in a *Soul Calibur* game—or fighting games in general for that matter.

The biggest addition is the character creation mode, in which you can create your own fighter. The character creation system isn't as robust as something you would find in a game like *Tiger Woods PGA Tour Golf*, but it offers enough variety to help you create a unique fighter. You can change the physical characteristics of your fighter, as well as his attire. Interestingly, you can even layer clothing to go for an even more distinctive look. As far as moves go, you either select from several preset classes (each with its own set of moves) or choose one of the pre-existing *Soul Calibur* characters.

Additionally, the weapon master mode in previous games has been replaced with a strategy game called Chronicles of the Sword, in which you maneuver your fighters into position on a map while defeating enemy emplacements in 1-on-1 battles—some with different conditions for victory.

Pub. Namco **Dev.** Namco

MARVEL NEMESIS: RISE OF THE IMPERFECTS

SUPERHERO CAGE MATCH

Not many new details have been given out about this game, which is based on the House of Ideas (as Marvel Comics is often called). At the San Diego Comic-Con, however, EA did reveal two more Marvel characters: Venom and Captain America (the latter will be exclusive to the PSP game). What's cooler news for comic fans is that Mark Millar, writer of Marvel's best series (*The Ultimates*), is handling the scripting duties for *Marvel Nemesis*. Another Marvel talent announcement was that while Jae Lee is supplying art for the home console version, artist Terry Dodson will be drawing art for the PSP version.

Pub. EA Games
Dev. EA Canada

OCTOBER

For better or for worse, it's coming out this year, so we'll see if the wait did anything for it.

L.A. RUSH

Get ready to blast through the Hollywood sign. *L.A. Rush* lets you spin your wheels through the vast interweaving streets of Los Angeles (in case you hadn't figured it out from the title) and test your mettle with the more than 80 races available.

FORD VS. CHEVY

After *Freddy vs. Jason* and *Alien vs. Predator, Ford vs. Chevy* somehow seemed inevitable. As long as it's not the cheapest heap ever visioned yet or found on the road dead, we'll be happy.

SHINING FORCE NEO

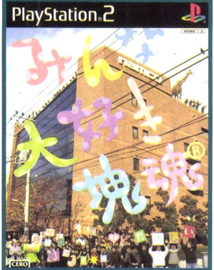
An action-RPG from Sega, *Shining Force Neo* features a straightforward real-time combat system not unlike the one found in *Shining Tears* and games like *Champions of Norrath*.

WILD ARMS ALTER CODE: F

The original *Wild Arms* was such a big hit back in 1997 that Sony CEI is remaking the game, this time calling it *Wild Arms Alter Code: F*. In this new version, you'll be able to control six characters instead of three, and the graphics look a whole lot better, but the story should be near and dear to fans of the original.

TRAPT

If you've been looking for a sequel to Tecmo's cult-classic *Deception* series, you've found it—sort of. While not a direct sequel, *Trapt* serves up similar trap-setting gameplay, offering guillotines, falling chandeliers, and even "dark illusion" traps that require puzzle-solving skills to activate.



WE LOVE KATAMARI

We're big fans of *We Love Katamari*'s Japanese cover, which is actually a photo of Namco employees in front of the company's office. If you look closely at the windows on the side of the building pictured, you can see the King of All Cosmos gazing down disapprovingly, ready to zap you with his laser eyes if you don't buy his game.

NBA LIVE 06

Many would consider the *Live* series to be the pioneer of right analog control in sports games, and not surprisingly, EA Sports wants to make that an even bigger part of *NBA Live 06*. Star players now have a huge assortment of moves to use depending on their skill level. Last year's popular All-Star

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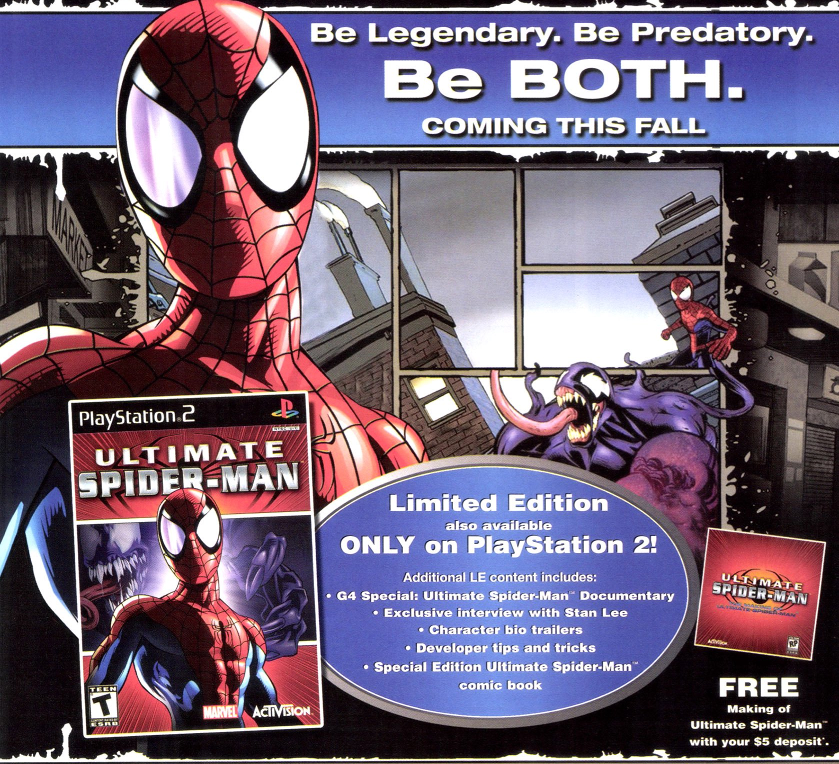
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Weekend mode will also be making a return appearance.

NBA 2K6

Though there are no more ESPN announcers, *NBA 2K6* is packed with so much content that you probably won't even notice their absence. You'll see the return of the franchise mode (which now allows you to track draft picks year-round) and 24/7 mode (complete with the ability to sign endorsement deals), and when you need to get away from it all, there will always be your crib to retreat to.

NBA 06

989's sports games have always strived to bring something new to the table, and while the ideas have been good on paper, they haven't always quite panned out in the games. *NBA 06* might break that trend, however, with the NBA life vol. 1 mode, in which you experience the NBA from behind the scenes, complete with a story and player-building options.

TOURNAMENT PAINTBALL MAX'D

If you prefer bruises to blood and oozing welts to shotgun blasts, *Greg Hastings' Tournament Paintball Max'd* could just be that nonlethal shooter you've been pining for. Activision plans to deliver real-life professional players (who knew?), sponsors, and fields, plus co-op and head-to-head multiplayer in three different game types. Start checking out paint chips.

PSP

INFECTED

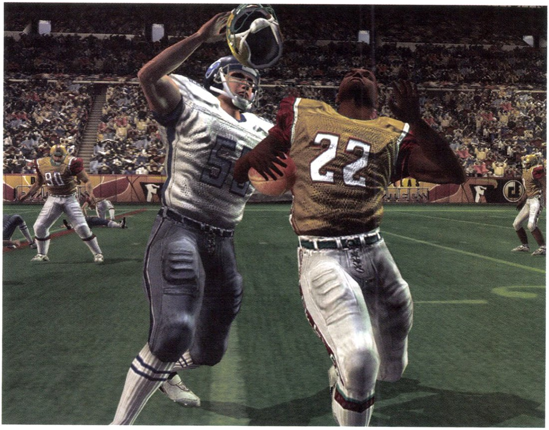
We can't say that the plot of Majesco's *Infected* gets our hearts racing (NYC cop tries to stop a mysterious virus), but we are very intrigued by the wireless multiplayer concept, which allows you to go in and "infect" your opponents' PSPs (with your own personalized zombies) if you defeat them.

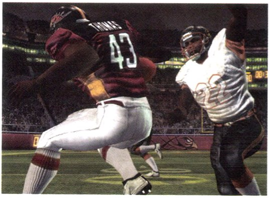
THE CON

The key to Sony CEA's fighter *The Con*—an all-out street brawler in which half the moves are fake—is the backstory: You're working with organized crime, and sometimes they make you take a fall for the cash. You can also map any photograph from your memory stick onto your fighter's face.

X-MEN LEGENDS II

Activision recently announced *X-Men Legends II* for the PSP, but it hasn't shown anything about it.





BLITZ: THE LEAGUE

THE MADDEN ALTERNATIVE

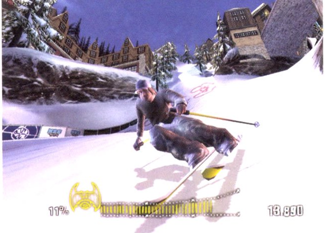
Come to think of it, Midway losing the NFL license may not have been so bad after all. Many of the reasons Midway's *NFL Blitz* series became so stagnant over the past few years is due in large part to pressure from the NFL, which wanted Midway to not only tone down the over-the-top hits that the series was known for, but basically turn *Blitz* into more of a football simulation. That's not what *Blitz* is, and that's not what it should ever become.

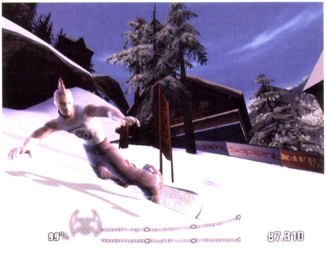
With that in mind, Midway has brought the series back to what made it so popular to begin with. You have absolutely insane hits—some of which require you to go to the sidelines and receive "treatment" in the form of a painkiller injection—but you also get fast-paced football action that isn't held back by the restrictions of a license. You'll see this in the form of clash juice, which you can earn by performing regular feats of athleticism on the field, such as catching a pass. Once you get enough juice, you can slow down the action if you're on offense or defense, making it possible to easily evade defenders or make a pinpoint hit on the ball carrier. Then there are unleash moves that essentially boost the stats of individual players. As you might expect, there's still a main franchise-like mode, but it focuses more on the theatrics of running a football team as opposed to the nuts and bolts.

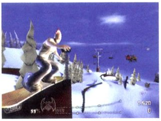
Pub. Midway **Dev.** Midway

A FOOTBALL SCREENPLAY

In order to highlight the drama of *Blitz*'s over-the-top action, Midway enlisted the help of one of the writers from ESPN's gridiron drama *Playmakers*—a gritty show which was cancelled due to pressure from the NFL.







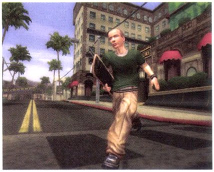
SSX ON TOUR

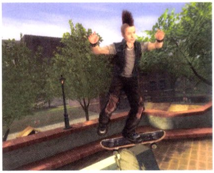
HIT THE SLOPES

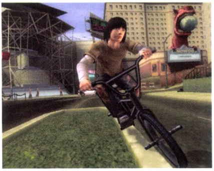
Two years after *SSX 3* completely overhauled the *SSX* experience (thanks to that massive mountain that can take you up to half an hour to descend from the very top to the very bottom), EA Canada is finally rolling out the no-number *SSX on Tour*. While it doesn't drop an entire mountain range as a playable level, it does bring a few new twists to the table, the first being the divide between snowboarding and skiing.

Right when you start the character-creation process, you choose whether your character is a snowboarder or a skier. Skiing has a whole set of unique tracks and trick sets, and it's just as fast, loose, and furious as snowboarding. Also, you might notice that we use the word "you" a lot here—that's because *SSX on Tour* has a full create-a-character mode, a departure from the previous games, in which most people would play as Elise (more because she's the tall, hot blonde that you can dress up in short shorts than for any particular advantage she brought to the skill side of things). The tour mode is focused on making your unique character win races, pull off mad tricks, buy cool loot, and become a superstar snowboarder/skier. There are a number of other tweaks and additions, but *SSX on Tour*'s main thrust is that the game is about how cool you are, whether you're a snowboarder or a skier.

Pub. EA Sports Big **Dev.** EA Canada







TONY HAWK'S AMERICAN WASTELAND

IMITATION = FLATTERY

Diagnosis: *Tony Hawk*'s got *GTA* fever. Symptoms: Activision's venerable skateboarding series weaves a tale in which you, a teen skater from the Midwest who's had it with parents, girls, and cops, need to escape—to L.A., skating mecca of America. There you meet and skate with like-minded runaways in a huge open-ended cityscape that includes famous icons, such as the Mann Chinese Theatre, East L.A., and the great Hollywood sign itself. You'll also meet Mindy, editor of skate fanzine *American Wasteland*, who will show you the ins and outs of the City of Angels. Missions consist of pulling combos and grab tricks for upgrade money, with the added plus that you can switch to a BMX bike as needed. You'll also meet new pros, like Tony Alva, and go up against them in the pro skater mode, where you'll find updated classic levels from previous *Tony Hawk* games. Prognosis: *Grand Theft Skate* looks good.

Pub. Activision **Dev.** Neversoft

For all we know, it could be the portable adventures of such X-Men luminaries as Jubilee, Dazzler, and Gambit as they fight world-threatening foes such as Arcade or Mojo. We can only hope.

Ys: The Ark of Napishtim

The PSP could really use some RPGs, and hopefully *Ys: The Ark of Napishtim* will be one of many coming. While it's essentially a port of its PlayStation 2 counterpart, the PSP version of the game has extras, including minigames, character profiles, and an option to listen to the soundtrack.

Bounty Hounds

It might be easy to mistake *Bounty Hounds* for some kind of *Dynasty Warriors* in space clone. You will be fighting dozens of enemies at once, but the arsenal is greater than those found in any of the *Dynasty Warriors* games. In fact, you'll have around 500 weapon and armor sets to choose from.

00 WINS
98
SUB-ZERO
BARAKA

Midway Arcade Treasures

The *Midway Arcade Treasures* collection for the PSP is sort of a compilation of the various *Arcade Treasures* games the company has released for the PS2. Not only will you find classics such as *Defender, Spy Hunter, Paperboy*, and *Klax*, but there are also some more recent entries, including the first three *Mortal Kombat* games. Many games will also support Wi-Fi multiplayer options.

NBA 06

In a shocking turn of events, the PSP version of *NBA 06* won't be a straight port of its console counterpart. Instead, the PSP version will focus more on core gameplay elements and minigames, such as HORSE, three-point shoot-out, as well as a new minigame called dodge ball. Other parts of the game, like the graphics, have also been cleaned up.

Gretzky NHL 06

The PSP version of *Gretzky NHL 06* is getting the new Wayne vs. Wayne mode just like its big brother, but what we're really hoping to see is a better framerate and improved handling from the last version. Keep your hockey sticks crossed.

Virtua Tennis

Some call it the greatest tennis game of all time. Others just call it by its street name, digital crack. Whatever your description for *Virtua Tennis*, know that you'll be able to satisfy your jonesing for some racket action very soon.

2005 FALL FRENZY BY THE NUMBERS

25
Number of sports games

129
Number of PS2 games

55%
Chance that a game is a sequel

1/3
Odds that a game will have a colon in its title

16%
Percentage of games that are new original properties

25
Number of games based on a movie or TV franchise

40
Number of PSP games

12
Number of games in which you're in the military

15
Number of racing games

7
Number of games that are collections of games

OPM MOST ANTICIPATED

Dana's Top 5
- Burnout Legends
- Burnout Revenge
- King Kong
- Sly 3: Honor Among Thieves
- Soul Calibur III

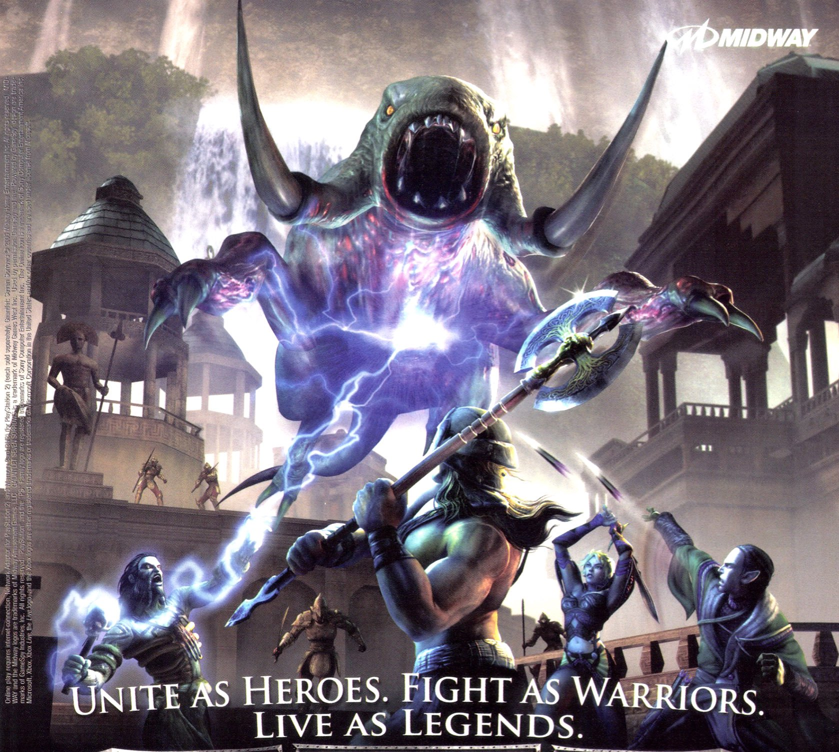
Giancarlo's Top 5
- Final Fantasy: Advent Children
- Blitz: The League
- Guitar Hero
- Soul Calibur III
- Shadow of the Colossus

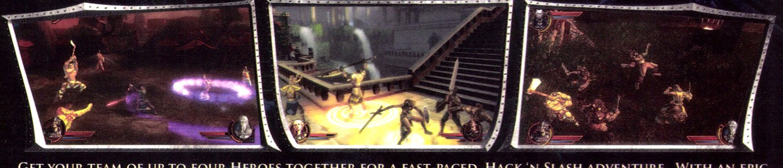
Joe's Top 5
- Prince of Persia 3
- Shadow of the Colossus
- SOCOM 3: U.S. Navy SEALs
- SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs Fireteam Bravo
- Virtua Tennis

Logan's Top 5
- Burnout Revenge
- 24: The Game
- GTA: Liberty City Stories
- The Matrix: Path of Neo
- Virtua Tennis

Scooter's Top 5
- Dragon Quest VIII
- GTA: Liberty City Stories
- Resident Evil 4
- Shadow of the Colossus
- Soul Calibur III

Tom's Top 5
- Burnout Revenge
- GTA: Liberty City Stories
- Prince of Persia 3
- Soul Calibur III
- X-Men Legends II: Rise of Apocalypse


MIDWAY
UNITE AS HEROES. FIGHT AS WARRIORS.
LIVE AS LEGENDS.



GET YOUR TEAM OF UP TO FOUR HEROES TOGETHER FOR A FAST-PACED, HACK 'N SLASH ADVENTURE. WITH AN EPIC STORYLINE, LIGHT RPG ELEMENTS AND ONLINE CO-OP FOR THE FIRST TIME, GAUNTLET SEVEN SORROWS TAKES THE GAUNTLET LEGEND TO A WHOLE NEW REALM OF EXCITEMENT.

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PlayStation 2

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CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

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XBOX

XBOX LIVE

GAUNTLET
SEVEN SORROWS

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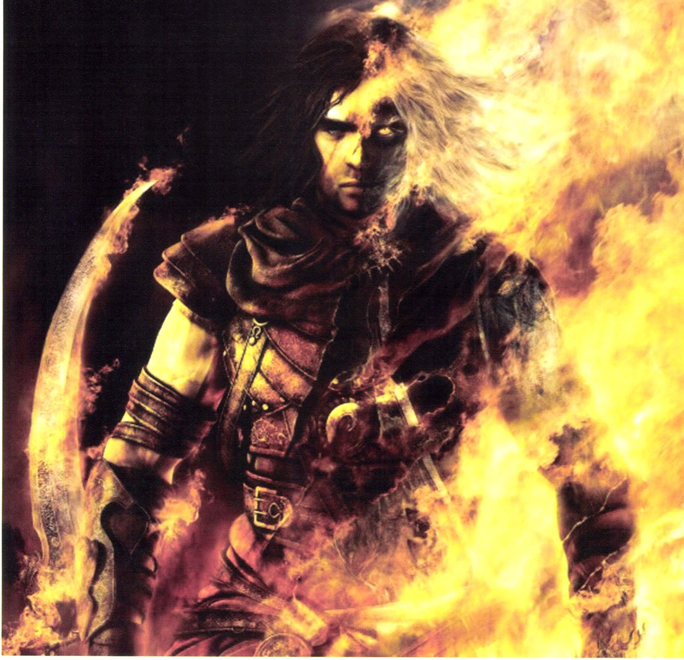
NOVEMBER



PRINCE OF PERSIA 3

PRINCE AND THE REVOLUTION

The Prince of Persia is officially bipolar. We've always sensed he was a little insane—and who wouldn't be after altering time and space itself and carrying the burden of the Sands of Time? And doesn't it take at least a pinch of mental disorder to execute those impossible gymnastics at those dizzying heights, fighting both the undead and living—and surviving virtually unscathed?

In *Prince of Persia 3,* however, the Prince's psychology goes beyond the insanity of the brave—he really does have a split personality, which comes in the form of the Dark Prince, a sort of doppelgänger that has been created as the result of the Prince's messing around with the Sands of Time. White-haired, gray-skinned, and with bright, empty eyes, the Dark Prince is exactly what he appears to be: a darker version of the troubled Prince. With his chain-whip blade at his side, the more stealth-prone Dark Prince lops off even more heads and spews even more blood than his lighter twin, using his own combat moves while progressing through his own story levels. Predictably, the two Princes don't get along, but will they eventually have to in order to set things right? During the quest to find this out, players will encounter larger open-ended game worlds (Babylon, for instance, is an ancient metropolis where the Prince can go just about anywhere on the rooftops and the streets) and a racing-game-like chariot sequence—take that, Ben-Hur!—that includes added combat opportunities. What we know of the story involves the Prince's girlfriend, Kaileena, and how she sacrifices her life to unleash the Sands of Time in order to save him. We also know that Babylon is in the throes of a civil war and the Prince's father blames his son for this. What is a Prince to do but run, fight, and figure a way out of this mess?

Ubisoft promises to bring the best parts of the previous two games (2003's *Sands of Time* and 2004's *Warrior Within)* to the *Prince of Persia 3* table. Charming dialogue, a comprehensible story line, and improved free-form combat that includes the one-move "speed stealth" kill top the list. The familiar obstacle-course level design returns, with enough pole-jumping and wall-running to keep the Prince busy. The series' usual stunning graphics include Babylon's wide rooftops and tight streets, plus flourishing gardens and claustrophobia-inducing tunnels and crypts. Add fluid character design and signature gameplay mechanics, like time control (when the Prince gets in a scrape, he can reverse time to a safe point), and you have a worthy sequel to what has become one of the PS2's most brilliant 3D action-adventure series—without the annoying Godsmack soundtrack. Prince, we await thee.

Pub. Ubisoft Dev. Ubisoft Montreal

BATTLEFIELD 2: MODERN COMBAT

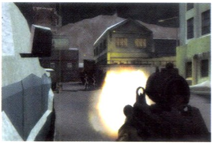
TELEPORTATION DEVICE INCLUDED

The name *Battlefield 2: Modern Combat* is a bit of a misnomer. While the original *Battlefield* came out to rave reviews on the PC back in 2002, this is actually the first time the series has made an appearance on consoles. *Modern Combat,* however, does feature the same squad-based online multiplayer combat found on the popular PC franchise. You'll find the same types of classes (but no squad commander) and the same types of massive, objective-based areas filled with dudes, respawn points, and vehicles.

What makes *Modern Combat* a little different from the PC version, however, is how it handles single player. Basically, while there will be lots of AI players, there's now the hot-swap button, which lets you switch between troops by just looking at one and hitting a button. Then you get a bizarre sequence in which you literally teleport from one soldier's head to another's, similar to what happens in that crazy Denzel Washington movie *Fallen.*

Of course, once you're sick of jumping around from soldier to soldier, you can just hop online and play against 23 other fools who own the game. Also, don't worry if you've never played the PC version, as the game has been streamlined enough to make even flying a helicopter a lot easier. Whether players can sit on the wing of a flying airplane remains to be seen.

Pub. EA Games **Dev.** Digital Illusions



501st LEGION
CELEBRATION III

STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT II

WHEN BEING A FAN PAYS

See these upstanding citizens in their shiny costumes? That's who you'll play as in *Battlefront II.* In the real world, they're known as the 501st Legion. The group started in 1997, when founder Albin Johnson wore a stormtrooper outfit to the premiere of *Star Wars Episode IV: Special Edition* and then posted pictures online. He got so many responses from fellow enthusiasts that he decided to create a group for these fellows and ladies to belong to. And that's how the 501st squad came to be. The squad soon had so many members that it became a full legion. When not at their day jobs, members of the 501st spend their time going to conventions (*Star Wars* related or not).

LucasArts noticed just how dedicated this legion of fans was and extended a thank you by making the squad the star of *Battlefront II.* So when you go through the campaign that starts at Geonosis (*Episode II*) and ends at Hoth (*Episode V*), you're playing a trooper enlisted in the 501st. Good to know that hardcore fandom can be acknowledged and thanked.

Pub. LucasArts **Dev.** Pandemic

GHOST RECON: ADVANCED WARFIGHTER

THIRD TIME'S THE CHARM?

Formerly known as *Ghost Recon 3,* the next chapter in Ubisoft's Tom Clancy–branded shooter series puts you in the middle of a near-future rebellion in Mexico City, where you'll take control of the Ghosts—an elite U.S. Special Forces team—in an effort to quell the uprising. The action takes place in a third-person perspective, in which you'll issue commands to your teammates from a redesigned HUD. You can now view the action from several different tactical interface windows, which give you access to satellite maps, scout drones, and radio communications.

Ubisoft has been quiet about multiplayer details, but you can count on seeing a variety of cooperative and competitive gameplay modes that should make hardcore *Ghost Recon* fans very happy...especially after the disappointment that PS2 players suffered through with *Ghost Recon 2.*

Pub. Ubisoft **Dev.** Ubisoft

MORE NOVEMBER

3
Eight attacks!

PS2

DRAGON QUEST VIII

After recently playing some more of the English build, we'll say it again: This game will rock. It's big, it's got a charming sense of humor, and it has a rocking art style. Here's a gameplay tip straight from creator Yuji Horii: Level up the sexiness attribute for Jessica (your female mage).

THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA

If *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* doesn't take you back to your childhood, then the terrorists have already won. Buena Vista Games is promising two-way multiplayer action, with each player taking on the roles of two of the four Pevensie brats as they fight to save the land from the evil White Witch.

FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE

The greatest Bond ever, Sean Connery, makes his gaming debut in the PS2 version of his hit film *From Russia With Love.* For those of you who haven't seen the 1963 classic, think of this new game as the follow-up to 2004's superb *Everything or Nothing,* in which Bond finds himself in intense third-person action. *Russia* comes replete with tuxedos, flamethrowers, jetpacks, and Sean Connery's actual voice. We'll take this one shaken *and* stirred.

GAUNTLET: SEVEN SORROWS

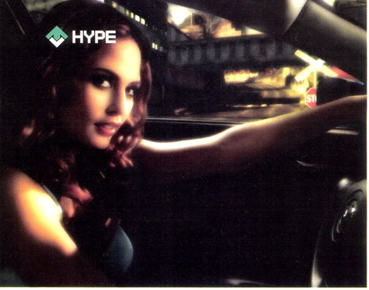
The original multiplayer action-RPG gets a *Diablo*-style makeover in *Gauntlet: Seven Sorrows.* Besides featuring fast-paced action, six playable characters (the original quartet, plus the lancer and the oddly named tragedian), and an unobtrusive inventory (to change into that fabulous new hat you got, you use a submenu that doesn't replace the screen, so everyone can keep fighting while you're changing), *Gauntlet* will also have a crazy "endless combat" mode that you could conceivably play until the end of time.

CASTLEVANIA: CURSE OF DARKNESS

Almost everything in *Castlevania: Curse of Darkness* has been designed to tackle problems in the previous game, *Lament of Innocence.* The fixed camera has been replaced with a free one that lets you look all over the environments, increasing the sense of exploration. *Curse of Darkness'* main character, Hector, can also summon various spirits to help him out of a jam.

HARRY POTTER AND THE GOBLET OF FIRE

Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire is not just a *Zelda* clone with British accents. The development team has made the game a more action-oriented title, and it almost feels like EA's *LOTR* games. All three kids are playable (you can switch characters on the fly, and the remaining two can be controlled by other players or the AI), and there are more



NEED FOR SPEED: MOST WANTED

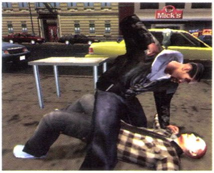
AMERICA'S MOST WANTED?

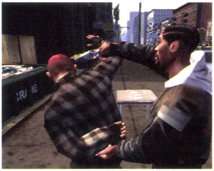
The last time we saw *Need for Speed: Most Wanted,* it was barely in the initial stages of production. While a few of the tracks and cars appeared to be finished, EA wasn't even close to revealing more than some basic information on the game. Now, however, some car manufacturers are finally letting EA talk about the cars of *Need for Speed: Most Wanted.* While some of the cars have yet to be revealed, EA has said on the record that the Mustang GT, the Carrera GT, and the Corvette will be in the game and ready to outrun cops with.

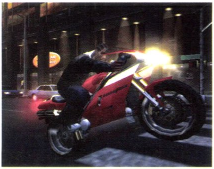
In our hands-on time, we got to compete in a tollbooth race, driving both the luxurious and nice-handling BMW M3 and the rotary-roaring Mazda RX-8. The tollbooth race is a timed race in which you barrel down a highway and extend your time limit by speeding past tollbooths. Also new is the speedbreaker, a sort of bizarre car bullet-time that allows you to slow the action down but maintain maneuverability, which is helpful for avoiding crashes or for making those extra-sharp turns. It's kind of similar to the zone feature found in Rockstar's *Midnight Club 3.* Also of note, the races appear to be seamlessly integrated into the world. One minute, you'll be doing a tollbooth race and in the next, the cops will be right on your tail, waiting for you to make a mistake so they can take you down and throw you in the pokey.

While the PSP game is pretty similar to the console iteration, we've heard a rumor floating around that it will be the only version in which you can actually play as a cop. Ten-four, good buddy.

Pub. EA Games **Dev.** EA Canada







TRUE CRIME: NEW YORK CITY

DARK CITY

Two years ago, Activision made an attempt to cash in on the success of crime-themed games such as *Grand Theft Auto* with its own *True Crime: Streets of L.A.* It apparently worked, as the game sold to the tune of 5 million copies, despite its mediocre critical reception. With this year's upcoming sequel, the series is moving to the Big Apple and putting you in the shoes of a former gang member turned rogue NYPD cop.

If you've seen *Training Day,* you've got some idea of what you're in for as Officer Marcus Reed, out on the mean streets of NYC. However, the real star of this game isn't its protagonist, but the city itself: Developer Luxoflux has meticulously reconstructed the sprawling geography of modern-day Manhattan—streets, buildings, subways, and landmarks—all of which are affected, for better or for worse, by your law enforcement tactics (or lack thereof).

And this is only the beginning. In true Quentin Tarantino fashion, *New York City* is the first of a two-part saga that will conclude in the as-yet-unannounced third installment of the series, which could be an early PS3 title.

Pub. Activision **Dev.** Luxoflux

spells (like Wingardium Leviosa), more challenges (once you start the Triwizard Tourney), more attacks, and spiffier graphics. We can't wait to see a polygonal "Mad-Eye" Moody.

SHIN MEGAMI TENSEI: DIGITAL DEVIL SAGA 2

The *Shin Megami Tensei* franchise is becoming our new favorite RPG series. If you got the first *Digital Devil Saga,* you likely noticed that it came in an oversized box that could hold two DVD cases. That's because both *DDS* games were already out in Japan, and Atlus was anticipating bringing both over to the States. Just between us, *Digital Devil Saga 2* has a better story and more interesting combat mechanics, so even if you skipped the previous game, you should check this one out.

COLLEGE HOOPS 2K6

The first thing you'll probably notice about *College Hoops 2K6* is the lack of an ESPN presentation, since 2K Sports lost that license to EA. However, you can still expect many of the same elements from previous editions, as well as a host of tweaks, including new control schemes that help make plays such as alley-oops a little easier to execute.

NCAA MARCH MADNESS

Last year's floor general play-calling system was a little lean, but *NCAA March Madness 06*'s version of it seems like it will be a little more robust, allowing you to take full advantage of specific defensive and offensive situations. There's also a new lockdown control that lets you instantly pressure the ball a number of different ways on defense.

AND1 STREETBALL

Think of *AND1 Streetball* as *FIFA Street,* but for basketball. And it's from Ubisoft. You play through your streetball using both analog sticks as your dribbling/trick interface, and you'll get to play with and against known AND1 ballers like Helicopter, Spinmaster, and Baby Shack.

FIFA 06

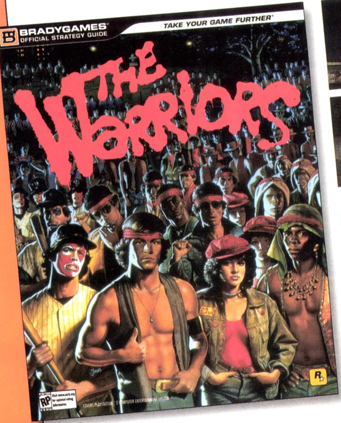
The task of making one of the best soccer games even better isn't an easy one, but *FIFA 06* will feature a few improvements that might make it worth your while. The general controls and shooting interface have been cleaned up a little, and there are a host of new formations and strategies ready for use when taking the ball down the pitch.

RUGBY CHALLENGE '06

Rugby Challenge '06 is pretty much like *Rugby Challenge '05,* only a year later. The game features

The armies of the night number 60,000 strong,

and tonight...


BRADYGAMES
OFFICIAL STRATEGY GUIDE
TAKE YOUR GAME FURTHER
THE WARRIORS
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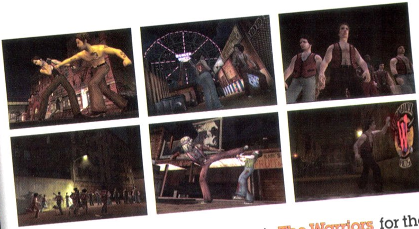

Rockstar Games proudly presents **The Warriors** for the PlayStation® 2 based on the 1979 Paramount Pictures cult classic movie. Developed by Rockstar Toronto, **The Warriors** expands the stylized cinematic journey of the film into a gritty interactive experience set in 1970s New York.

they're all after The Warriors.

BRADYGAMES
TAKE YOUR GAME FURTHER

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licensed European teams (only France was a hold-out—figures) and updated rules.

THE SIMS 2

EA's best-selling series is returning to consoles with *The Sims 2*. Even with a scope that's been whittled down from the PC version, there's still plenty of new challenges for your Sim, including the console-exclusive cooking system in which you can whip up dishes that can help you fulfill your goals more quickly.

AMERICAN CHOPPER

Yay, another *American Chopper* game from Activision! We're assuming it's a value-priced title. No other details are known, like whether or not Jay Leno will walk in or what Big Paul will yell about.

AQUANOX: THE ANGEL'S TEARS

AquaNox: The Angel's Tears is a space sim/third-person vehicle action game that takes place underwater! We really enjoyed the PC version that came out in 2001, so hopefully JoWood can do a good adaptation of the series for PS2.

BATTLESTATIONS: MIDWAY

The idea of multiplayer battles in the Pacific theater of conflict in World War II in which every vehicle is a human player sounds pretty spiffy. Which makes us very glad that THQ has kindly picked up *Battlestations: Midway* for American release.

MAGNA CARTA: TEARS OF BLOOD

Atlus is bringing over the popular Korean RPG *Magna Carta: Tears of Blood*. While the company's games have traditionally been incredibly difficult, Atlus is hoping that the snazzy graphics, neat look, and real-time combat system of this game will appeal to more mainstream RPG fans.

MEGA MAN X COLLECTION

Do you prefer Mega Man X over Mega Man classic? Then we have some good news for you: Capcom is bundling a bunch of *Mega Man X* SNES and PS1 games together into a package called *Mega Man X Collection*!

PAC-MAN WORLD 3

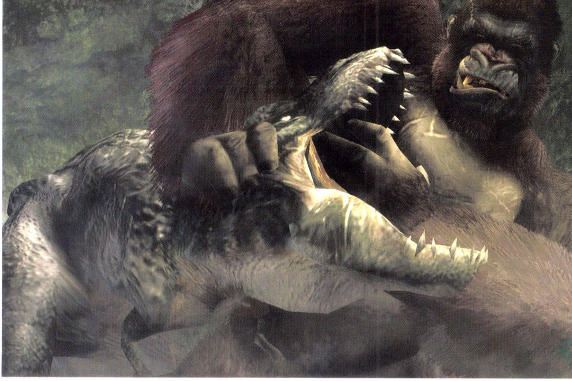
In a season laden with sequels, it's only fitting that we should see *Pac-Man World 3*. Gamers can get more 3D Pac-Man, and now he has buddies like ghosts Pinky and Clyde helping him out.

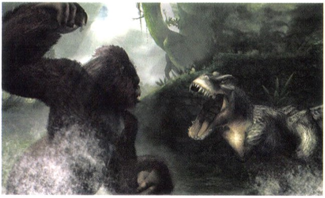
THE BIBLE GAME

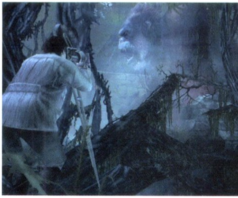
What did Noah build? Who led the Israelites out of Egypt? Where did Adam and Eve live? If you know the answers to these questions, then *The Bible Game* might be your cup of tea; if you don't, this could prove to be a handy tutoring tool.

WINX CLUB

Konami loves reaching out to audiences of all kinds, as evidenced by *Winx Club*, a whimsical third-person action game (targeted toward girls) that's based on the animated series about young witches saving the world from evil.







KING KONG

READY FOR SOME MONKEYING AROUND?

Based on the Universal film directed by *Lord of the Rings'* Peter Jackson (set for release in December), Ubisoft's *King Kong* isn't your typical movie-based game. Backed by its own directorial star power in Michel Ancel (who also directed the popular *Rayman* and the excellent but overlooked *Beyond Good & Evil*) and a potent potpourri of game styles—first-person shooter, third-person action, and brawler—Ubisoft seems set on building its own *King Kong* empire.

The game's plot follows closely that of the film's: It's the 1930s, the time of the Great Depression and the rise of Hollywood. B-grade moviemaker Carl Denham (played by Jack Black) is looking for a hit and thinks he may have one by filming on a mysterious tropical island. His cast and crew (which include writer Jack Driscoll, played by Adrien Brody, and leading lady Ann Darrow, played by Naomi Watts) find more than they bargain for when they arrive and encounter giant prehistoric beasts and a certain overgrown ape. In the game, you'll be playing both as Driscoll (in first person) and Kong (in third person).

For the game, the star of the show will be, of course, King Kong himself. Ancel is paying extra attention to ensure that the team gets his simian majesty just right. "The main idea is that when you play Kong, you can't fail by your moves," says Ancel, the man handpicked by Jackson himself, who is a longtime gamer and *Beyond Good & Evil* fan. "You will not fall like in a platformer—[that's] not King-like."

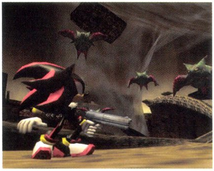
What *is* King-like? Running along a cliff wall like a certain Prince of Persia, swinging from a tree branch, and power-bombing a pair of T-Rexes while the camera dramatically swoops and pans but somehow doesn't seem to hamper gameplay.

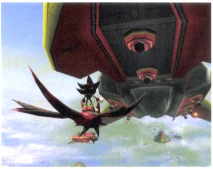
We'll tell you more details about what it's like to body slam a dinosaur (and play as puny human Driscoll) in our December *Kong* cover story. You'll also get a chance to find out for yourself what it's like to be Kong in the exclusive playable demo coming on the December disc.

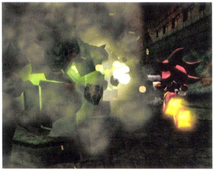
Pub. Ubisoft **Dev.** Ubisoft France

STAR POWER

Hello, Hollywood! The game will feature the voice talents of the movie's cast, including principals Naomi Watts, Adrien Brody, and Jack Black.







SHADOW THE HEDGEHOG

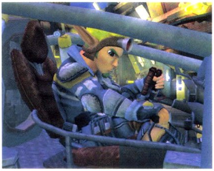
SONIC + SHOOTING = ?

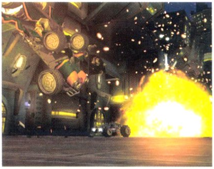
You remember Sonic. You know, blue hedgehog, runs really fast, bounces on things, and frees furry animals? You remember those 3D games he was in, such as *Sonic Heroes*? (Yeah, you probably don't want to, but bear with us here.) OK, picture that 3D, hyperactive platforming formula, only edgier, and with guns.

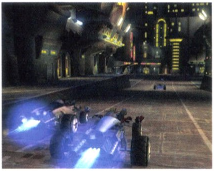
That's pretty much *Shadow the Hedgehog* in a nutshell. Shadow himself is essentially Sonic with body detailing: black fur, red highlights—and, oh yeah, big-ass guns. The addition of firepower to the formula makes *Shadow* play almost like a *Ratchet & Clank* game in fast-forward...only a lot less easy on the eyes.

Guns and grit aren't the only additions, though: Shadow actually has a backstory and a series of good-versus-evil choices in front of him that will affect the game's (gasp!) story. We don't want to get too down on the game at this point, but, well, *Sonic Heroes* wasn't exactly Game of the Year material, so forgive us if we restrain our enthusiasm for the time being.

Pub. Sega **Dev.** Sega







JAK X: COMBAT RACING

THE JOY OF X

If, after hearing about *Jak X*, you went back and played the dune buggy bits in *Jak 3*, you'd be forgiven for having zero interest in this racer. While the free-roaming, *Smuggler's Run*–like segments were great, the actual buggy races were frustrating as hell.

Now, listen closely: Do not worry. The, shall we say, "demanding" physics of *Jak 3* have been completely overhauled so that the game bears much more of a resemblance to Naughty Dog's excellent *Crash Team Racing* than anything else. Only we don't remember *CTR* boasting destructible environments, a damage model for its karts, or six-way online multiplayer. Or upgradeable vehicles that were customizable down to goofy accessories. And we're positive you couldn't unlock new items in *CTR* by plugging in your PSP with a game save from the upcoming portable platformer *Daxter*.

But yes, all this is found in *Jak X*, plus weapon pick-ups, deathmatch arenas, an hour of cinematics advancing the *Jak and Daxter* story line, and a dozen or so racecourses with alternate pathways.

Pub. Sony CEA **Dev.** Naughty Dog

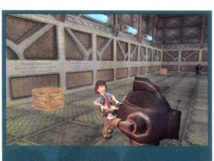
RATCHET DEADLOCKED

MOVE OVER, KILLZONE

It's pretty bizarre that *Ratchet* has evolved from a fun, lombax-filled platformer series into a fast-paced hardcore action title. While the press tried to elevate *Killzone* into a *Halo* killer, it turns out that *Ratchet* is now a lot more like *Halo* than even *Killzone*. Robotic-armored hero. Squadmates that fight alongside you. Weapons that blow stuff up all pretty like. Sounds like *Halo* to us.

The levels are hectic and action-packed. One mission requires you to defend against an onslaught of robotic bomb-wielding zombies. And since this is some sort of intergalactic reality show, there will be plenty of boss encounters under the guise of fighting other contestants.

Pub. Sony CEA
Dev. Insomniac



ZATHURA

Some might describe *Zathura* as "*Jumanji* in space," and they wouldn't be off—both were even written by the same guy. The game (based on the upcoming movie, which is based on the book) follows two brothers who are playing a mysterious board game; instead of bringing a jungle to life in their living room, however, they are transported to outer space and must figure out how to get back to Earth in this action-adventure game.

SHREK SUPERSLAM

Beat the crap out of all your favorite *Shrek* characters in Activision's *Shrek SuperSlam*. Sorry, there's no mode here for beating the crap out of the game's designers.

SHAMU'S BIG ADVENTURE

Journey with Shamu as he makes his way through the world in *Shamu's Big Adventure*. Then imagine Shamu's big whale eyes getting bigger when he finds out there is no basement in the Alamo.

TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES 3

Saying that the last *TMNT* game wasn't too hot is a massive understatement, but *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 3: Mutant Nightmare* promises better multiplayer features. As in the last game, the original arcade *TMNT* is available as unlockable content.

WITHOUT WARNING

The members of Core who broke away from Lara Croft's overmilked teat have come up with a new *24*-style third-person action game, *Without Warning*. It's being published by that fine purveyor of Eastern conflict games, Capcom.

DEVIL KINGS

We think that Capcom should have given *Devil Kings* the name *Devil Dynasty Warriors*—but we mean that in a good way. Choose a fighting style and then try to unite the enemies of ancient Japan into one big happy family.

LEGEND OF KAY

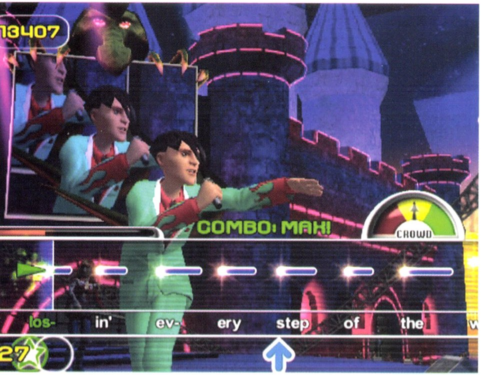
We only need to say one thing about *Legend of Kay*: It stars a ninja cat. We are so excited by the prospect of a ninja cat that we have each preordered 10 copies of the game. If you are not as excited as we are, then you must be a communist.

DRAGON BALL Z: BUDOKAI TENKAICHI

We're OK with the existence of yet another *DBZ* game, as long as it isn't *Sagas*. Since Atari's latest installment is *Dragon Ball Z: Budokai Tenkaichi*, our luck appears to be holding.

FINAL FIGHT: STREETWISE

Capcom packs a 3D punch with *Final Fight: Streetwise*, the latest in its legendary arcade-brawler series. Earning the respect of your peers will be one of the key components of the game (you'll be able to do this by kicking people's asses and winning minigames), so start listening to some Aretha now to get inspired.



KARAOKE REVOLUTION PARTY

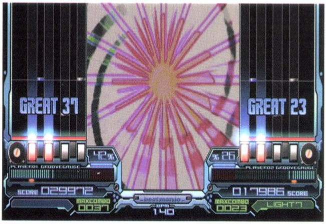
GOOD TIMES NEVER SEEMED SO GOOD

You know you've always wanted to sing along to "Sweet Caroline." Well, you closet Neil Diamond fan, now's your chance, with *Karaoke Revolution Party*. The fourth installment of the sing-along series is sure to turn on your heart light with that classic, plus 49 more songs ranging from golden oldies to cutting-edge hits.

But new songs are just the beginning. Witness "sing & dance" mode, which adds dance steps to your routine with the use of an optional *Dance Dance Revolution* dancepad. More peripheral fun can be had with an EyeToy, which beams your real-time image to video screens in the game. If that doesn't float your boat, you'll also be able to customize your in-game character.

And what would a party be without a multiplayer tournament, which expands on the series' two-player mode for mass competition? And, of course, you'll still be able to sing duets, too. So limber up your larynxes, people. It's time to sing.

Pub. Konami Dev. Harmonix



BEATMANIA

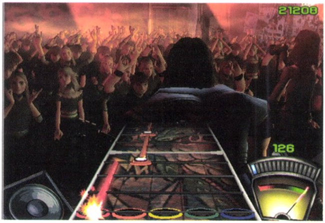
HEY MR. DJ, PUT A RECORD ON

The game that virtually launched the rhythm-music genre is finally (and by "finally," we mean "eight years after its debut") coming to the United States, boasting more than 50 pop, techno, drum 'n' bass, trance, and house tunes. If you're not familiar with the *Beatmania* phenomenon, allow us to lay down some education.

As in a game like *Dance Dance Revolution*, players of *Beatmania* must hit marks in time to music, prompted by icons scrolling on the screen. But *Beatmania* is controlled with a simplified hybrid keyboard/turntable controller. You hit the appropriate notes on the keys of the keyboard and go to town on the turntable bit when prompted.

Expect some licensed tunes, but since Konami hasn't started throwing around names of songs or performers yet, it remains to be seen whether *Beatmania*'s music roster will lean as heavily toward Japanese performers as its predecessors have. Our guess is no, but you never can tell.

Pub. Konami Dev. Konami



GUITAR HERO

MOVE OVER, HENDRIX

For years, those who've imported Japanese PS2 games sang the praises of Konami's *Guitar Freaks* rhythm game, but the chances of it coming to North America were always slim. While Konami sits on its butt, RedOctane has taken the reigns with *Guitar Hero*, a guitar rhythm game in the same vein as Konami's *Guitar Heroes*, but with more features and an even better guitar peripheral.

The peripheral itself features two more buttons than the Konami guitar (for five total buttons on the neck) as well as a whammy bar. Also, the company has been considering the use of a mercury sensor so that it can tie in movement of the guitar into the game. As far as the soundtrack goes, you can expect music from artists such as the Red Hot Chili Peppers, Boston, Megadeth, the Donnas, Jimi Hendrix, ZZ Top, Black Sabbath, White Zombie, Queens of the Stone Age, David Bowie, the Ramones, Franz Ferdinand, Deep Purple, Cream, and Sum 41. Rock on, my friend.

Pub. RedOctane Dev. Harmonix

EYETOY: CHAT & SPYTOY

PRACTICAL PLAY

Two upcoming titles will let you use your PS2 in a practical fashion. *Chat* lets you use your console as a videophone. You'll be able to talk with anyone else online, and while the picture isn't the best quality, it gets the job done. It even includes simple games (like checkers) that you can play with a friend. *SpyToy* lets you use the EyeToy to set up surveillance cameras. There are also minigames here, including bomb disarming.

Pub. Sony CEA Dev. Sony

Beat Down: Fists of Vengeance

Forget love—these guys are about the money. In Capcom's *Beat Down: Fists of Vengeance*, you'll play as members of a group of mercenaries who are chasing down enemy drug cartels and exacting revenge. Five different characters will be playable, including Aaron, the bastard love child of drug overlord Zanetti.

Rogue Trooper

Based on the comic of the same name, *Rogue Trooper* is a third-person shooter set in the futuristic world of Nu Earth. Your goal is to avenge the deaths of your fellow soldiers by tracking down and killing the Traitor. What distinguishes this from the pack of other sci-fi-tinged action games? The protagonist picked up the bio-synth chips from three of his murdered squadmates, so he'll have all of their abilities on tap as well as his own.

Sniper Elite

It's 1945. World War II is just winding down. You're a sniper for the OSS in third-person stealthfest *Sniper Elite*. Add some Coke and Krispy Kremes and start shooting.

Payout Poker and Casino

Create an avatar and then hit the town(s) in *Payout Poker and Casino*. Choose from a variety of poker games (Texas hold 'em, five card stud, Omaha) or casino standards like roulette or blackjack. Win big, and you'll get to blow those virtual winnings on virtual loot in the virtual gift shop. Yee-haw.

World Championship Poker 2

Professional poker player Howard Lederer (brother of Annie Duke) is the face of this year's *World Championship Poker 2*. Although the types of poker available have dropped from 18 to 14, this iteration has added the option of a tell-and-bluff system.

IHRA Drag Racing

Bethesda is retooling *IHRA Drag Racing* to be a little more console friendly with new arcade modes. For the more hardcore, there's still the 12-event season.

World Racing 2

Though it would make sense to assume that *World Racing 2* is a sequel to 2002's Xbox-only *World Racing*, that assumption would be wrong. The game is actually a sequel to the 2003 European racer *Mercedes-Benz World Racing*, although a variety of vehicle manufacturers will be represented. Feature of note: The game includes a realism meter, which allows you to pick one of five settings ranging from "arcade" to "simulation."

PSP

F1 Grand Prix

All of those F1 fans who have been weeping over their bereft PSPs can dry their eyes: *F1 Grand Prix* is coming to the handheld system. You'll be able to import your own music into the game, and of course, there will be wireless multiplayer, with up to eight players able to compete against each other. You'll also be able to download updates, so all the season's stats will remain up to date.

NBA Live 06

Even though he didn't quite squeak out a championship, *NBA Live 06* cover athlete Dwyane Wade (of the Miami Heat) will grace EA's first venture into regulation NBA games on the PSP (as well as the covers of the console versions).

SSX on Tour

The *SSX* franchise is getting a new look (with simple line drawings gracing the interface), new equipment (pick between snowboards or skis this time around), and new merchandise (from the likes of K2, Burton, and Anon), so it seems only fitting that it also comes to a new platform (PSP).

The Apprentice

What do you do when your hit series starts to founder? Why, make a licensed videogame, of course! *The Apprentice* allows you to grovel at the feet of The Donald in hopes of obtaining a virtual position in his company. You'll also get to enjoy digital avatars of George and Carolyn, plus past *Apprentice* contestants.

The Godfather

The Godfather is coming in a portable flavor, so you'll be able to work on your family connections while on the go. Presumably it will be similar to the full-size version, which has you working your way up the ladder to become the Godfather, though specifics have yet to be revealed.

Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire

When we say "Pocket Potter," we don't mean some sort of portable planting device or a miniature toilet; we mean the PSP version of *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*. Pretty much everything from the PS2 version of *Harry Potter* is maintained in this PSP game, and the PSP also adds Wi-Fi play, so you and your PSP compadres can each play one of the three wizards. Good times, indeed.

The Sims 2

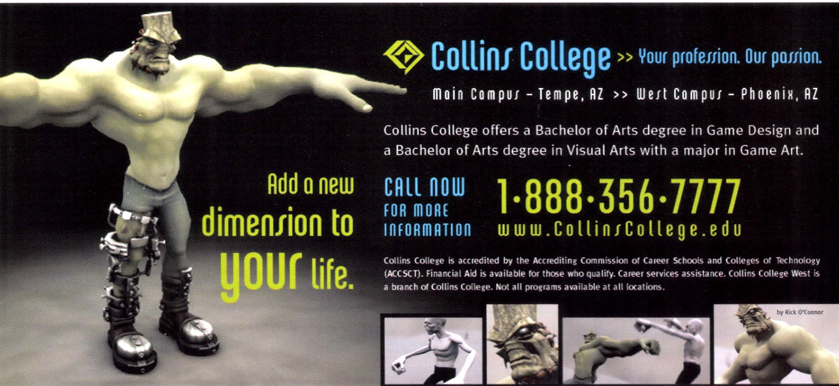
The PSP version of *The Sims 2* is based on the same concept of storytelling that drove the PC game. Here, you're dropped into Strangetown, and find yourself helping Bella Goth recover from a recent alien abduction. If you like a friend's Sim better than yours, it's no worry—thanks to Wi-Fi, you can simply beam him or her on over.

WRC

For people whose taste in racing goes beyond "turn left," Sony Europe is bringing *WRC* to the PSP. Make your way through the 16 rally circuits around the world. It, of course, includes wireless multiplayer, allowing up to eight players.

Metal Gear Acid 2

Kojima Productions is aiming to make *Metal Gear Acid 2* a faster, prettier sequel. No more gray hallways and dark bases—now we get crazy manga-style color schemes and outrageous cel shading. While the gameplay will be the same, the new cards and interface tweaks will work to make the experience itself quicker and more compact so that you don't miss your bus stop while trying to finish up a mission.



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by Rick O'Connor

Guilty Gear Judgment

Majesco has brought back your favorite wacky fighters in *Guilty Gear Judgment*. Join Jam Kuradoberi, Ky Kiske, Sol Badguy, and 17 others as you battle your way through 20-plus levels in single player. The word is that this title is based on *Guilty Gear Isuka*, which hit American PS2s last fall.

Payout Poker and Casino

Namco's not saying what, if anything, will distinguish the little version of *Payout Poker and Casino* from its console siblings, but the company has promised that it will offer you the chance to take your gambling on the go.

Chronicles of Narnia

The PSP version of Buena Vista's *Chronicles of Narnia* sounds like it's going to turn out to be a straight port of the PS2 version, only we're expecting ad hoc multiplayer support for four-player minotaur-bashing to cast a spell of Christian allegory in a 100-foot radius around your PSP.

Marvel Nemesis: Rise of the Imperfects

The structure of fighting games lends itself well to the PSP, which is part of the reason we're excited to see *Marvel Nemesis: Rise of the Imperfects* (the other part definitely isn't that we spend a lot of time daydreaming that we are superheroes).

Tokobot

Clearly inspired by puzzle-strategy games like *Lemmings* and *Pikmin*, Tecmo (primarily known for its Xbox games) is making its PSP debut with *Tokobot*, an action-adventure in which you, as hero Bolt, must lead your "tokobots" through ancient ruins in a bid to save the world from a horrific end. You'll start with six tokobots and gather more as you progress through the game. Using team combos, your tokobots will help you negotiate obstacles and traps and fend off enemies. Tokorific.

JOE
SILVIA
V
POINTS

Viewtiful Joe: VFX Battle

Its unique cel-shaded 2D art style, quirky story and characters, and old-school beat-em-up gameplay spelled instant classic for *Viewtiful Joe* when it hit store shelves in 2004. This year's follow-up, *Viewtiful Joe: VFX Battle*, introduces two-player modes, both competitive and cooperative, that utilize the PSP's Wi-Fi features. Henshin a-go-go, baby!

Lord of the Rings: Tactics

From the team that brought you last year's *Lord of the Rings: The Third Age* comes a slightly different

FATAL FRAME III: THE TORMENTED

NOTHING A LITTLE LASER SURGERY WON'T FIX

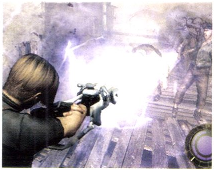
Those of you who are prone to spending long, tequila-soaked nights in Mexican border towns are no doubt familiar with the experience of waking up with a tattoo whose origin is a complete mystery. But what would you do if, night after night, the tattoo kept growing?

That's the situation young Rei Kurosawa finds herself in following the death of her fiancé in a car accident. Since that time, every night she is plunged into a horrible nightmare in which she is forced to explore the House of Sleep, a vast estate populated by souls cursed with an evil tattoo. And each morning, she wakes to discover that same tattoo growing on her own body.

Armed only with the occult Camera Obscura and the help of two friends, Rei must solve the mystery of the tattoo before it claims her entirely. As in previous *Fatal Frame* episodes, the camera serves as both weapon and guide, revealing clues to the game's many puzzles when it's not being used to battle attacking spirits. But unlike in previous games, you'll now choose which character you'll control. Will you choose the well-balanced Rei, the nimble Miku, or the muscular Kei? Choose wisely, or you'll be sucked into the nightmare forever.

Of course, you could just lay off the tequila in the first place.

Pub. Tecmo **Dev.** Tecmo



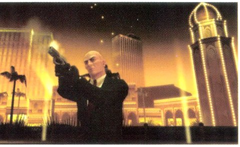
RESIDENT EVIL 4

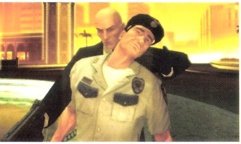
READY YOUR CHAIN SAW

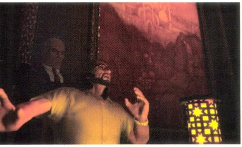
The best GameCube game yet—heck, one of the best games overall in 2005—is finally landing on the PS2. For those of you without GameCubes, this is the *Resident Evil* title that completely redefines the franchise: *RE4* is a fast, tense action-horror title. It's easy to be scared of the translation, as the GameCube version graphically pushed the little Nintendo machine to the limit, and the PS2 just doesn't have the same technical horsepower as the GameCube. Yet these screens show that the graphics, while not a picture-perfect translation, hold their own.

One of the few criticisms of the GameCube version was its use of letterbox. Sure, the game looks more cinematic because of it, but gamers with widescreen televisions got the same black-bar treatment as everyone else. Capcom Japan won't talk details, but it's claimed that the PS2 version will support true widescreen, so if you have a spiffy television, *RE4* should fill up all of it. Other enhancements include a bevy of new weapons (one, the plagas-removal laser 412, is pictured above). And yes, for you crazies out there, there will be a PS2-compatible version of the *RE4* chain-saw controller.

Pub. Capcom **Dev.** Capcom







HITMAN: BLOOD MONEY

THE BALD AND THE BEAUTIFUL

Money may be the root of all evil, and that's just fine for Agent 47—as long as it's in the form of cold, hard cash. The gaming world's most beloved assassin is back in *Blood Money*, with a fresh story, bigger, better weapons and equipment and an all-new upgrade path. A skillful kill means a big payday, and the cleaner and quieter the hit, the greater the fee. Cash accumulation leads to dozens of upgrades, including silencers, faster reload times, and increased accuracy.

Blood Money features larger, more detailed environments (the casino level we saw looked sharp, down to the decorative *Arabian Nights* theme), and the improved lighting and camera control make it easier to execute stealth hits (notoriety plays a factor as well, so while you will be able to complete a mission with guns ablazin', you'll be more easily recognized in later missions). As the story goes, our hair-challenged Agent 47 finds himself in the middle of a war between rival assassination agencies, and already a few of his colleagues have been bumped off. Could he be next? What happens when the assassin becomes the mark? Let's just call this one *Mr. & Mrs. Hitman*.

Pub. Eidos Dev. IO Interactive

THE MATRIX: PATH OF NEO

BECOME THE CHOSEN ONE—FINALLY

2003's *Enter the Matrix*'s standing in gaming history is a dubious one. It sold in the millions yet was widely seen as an overhyped critical disaster. Mired with bugs, it did not have you play as Neo; instead, secondary characters Niobe and Ghost drove the story. Developer Shiny—led by stalwart designer Dave Perry—is setting things right with its latest effort, *The Matrix: Path of Neo*. In a stroke of game-design genius, here's a *Matrix* game that *actually has you play as Neo* in a third-person action-adventure setting.

Dubbed a "director's cut" by Perry, *Path of Neo* follows the chosen one through a plot that includes all the events from the three *Matrix* films, but with a new ending and other additions. This plot construction lets Neo build his powers and abilities in a logical way, and allows film footage to be used for cut-scenes. It also means the return—at least in likeness—of the film's stars, including Keanu Reeves (Neo), Laurence Fishburne (Morpheus), and Carrie-Anne Moss (Trinity).

Pub. Atari Dev. Shiny Entertainment

GUN

HOW THE WEST WAS WON

The folks at Neversoft want to prove that they're more than just dudes who can make skateboarding games. Now, don't assume this is *Tony Hawk* with horses, or even a game version of the Clint Eastwood classic *Paint Your Wagon*. It's a harsh Western—the developers cite *Deadwood*, *Unforgiven*, and Cormac McCarthy novels as influences. Neversoft president Joel Jewett describes the tone of *Gun* as such: "You're 18 to 20 years old, you walk into a bar, and everything you want is available to you: cards, whiskey, whores. But everyone else in the room has a f***ing gun!"

Expect to see lots of horses and third-person gunplay as you ride around the streets of Dodge City, righting wrongs and shooting scoundrels and seducing prostitutes. Maybe you'll have a shoot-out against Tony Hawk's great-great-great-great-grandfather or something.

Pub. Activision Dev. Neversoft

take on the *LOTR* RPG. Think *Final Fantasy Tactics* meets Middle-earth; *LOTR: Tactics* includes all the characters and settings from the *LOTR* films, plus content from the newly acquired *LOTR* book license. The PSP has been in need of good RPGs, so let's hope this is the one to lead them all.

Pac-Man World 3

It is a proven scientific fact that Pac-Man will never die. Witness the impending arrival of *Pac-Man World 3*, the roaming 3D platformer from Namco. Never fear, Pac-Maniacs, the game isn't only in 3D; Pac's platforming will be interspersed with segments set in classic levels from the old-school arcade games.

Neopets Petpet Adventure

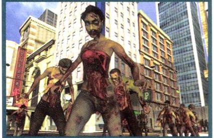
The amazingly popular Neopets franchise (the free website boasts more than 265 trillion page views) is also coming to PSP. *Neopets Petpet Adventure: The Wand of Wishing* will be a third-person action game with four different playable characters; the story follows a pair of Neopets who are snooping around Neopia and discovering hidden realms.

SOCOM: Fireteam Bravo

If you just can't stand to be away from your *SOCOM* clan, you're in luck. *SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs Fireteam Bravo* will let you get your shooting on while away from your TV, and it will even support online play (and yes, clans), so you can fight terrorism while kicking back with a latte at Starbucks. Truly, the future has arrived.

Mortal Kombat: Deception

Yes, you guessed it. The PSP version of *Mortal Kombat: Deception* is essentially a port of the PS2 version, so you can expect many of the same features, including the konquest adventure mode and a variety of minigames, including Puzzle Kombat, Midway's version of Capcom's *Puzzle Fighter*.



Pursuit Force

Think of *Pursuit Force* as *Grand Theft Auto* set entirely during a highway chase sequence. You start by barreling down the motorway in a hot-rod cop car with a pistol in hand. Drive close enough to the perp and you can actually leap out of your car and onto his, and then fight your way from the hood of his car to the driver's seat. Sounds like a fantastic training video!

Xyanide

Playlogic is kickin' it old school with its 3D shooter *Xyanide*. Wi-Fi multiplayer, lots of weapons, and just general wave-after-wave action promise fun for the just-pick-it-up-and-play crowd.

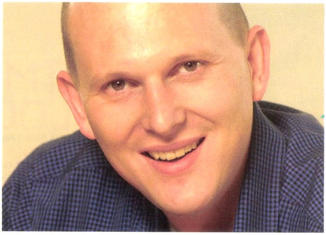
Street Fighter Alpha

It was bound to happen at some point: The *Street Fighter Alpha* series is making an appearance on the PSP. Capcom's not saying much about the game, but it's a pretty good bet that it will be nearly identical to the GBA version in terms of features and extra characters. Most fans will be happy to know that it will support wireless multiplayer.

NEWS

NINJA VANISH?

The head of Tecmo's Team Ninja—the development team behind *Ninja Gaiden* (pictured in the screen above) and the *Dead or Alive* series—has voiced concern over the storage format for the Xbox 360. The normally pro-Xbox Tomonobu Itagaki said in an interview with *Famitsu* that the current format may not be sufficient for Japanese developers that prefer prerendered cinemas over those done in real time. Since the Xbox 360 displays games in HD resolutions, these cinemas are going to take up more space, leaving less space for additional movies or game data. While this doesn't mean Team Ninja will support the PS3 (Itagaki claims that Team Ninja is too busy with current projects), it does suggest that Itagaki's preference to develop on more powerful hardware may lead the team in that direction. «



SONY TAKES A SHIFT

A number of changes have recently happened within the walls of Sony. Phil Harrison (pictured above), formerly the executive president of Sony Computer Entertainment Europe, has been promoted to Sony Computer Entertainment's chief executive producer position, making him the overseer of all Sony-developed games worldwide. That probably explains why Harrison had such a strong presence at E3 (he introduced all of the PS3 demos). Interestingly, Kazunori Yamauchi, the president of Polyphony Digital, has been promoted to being the corporate executive in charge of Polyphony Digital (which makes sense considering the amount of influence the *Gran Turismo* series has). It's likely that additional staffing changes will be made as we approach the release of the PlayStation 3. «

THE WATCHDOG

MOVIES VS. VIDEOGAMES: WHY MOVIES STILL MATTER MORE

JOHN SCALZI is our man keeping an eye on things for the benefit of all gamers. You can see more of his thoughts at www.scalzi.com.

I don't want to suggest I'm a fat slob, but the fact of the matter is, I hate to exercise. Not because I despise physical exercise (I played soccer and ran track in high school) but simply because it's so damn boring. Some people might think it's fun to run around for an hour or lift weights or whatever, but I would typically rather dip my head in a bucket of lye. As they say, your mileage may vary.

Fortunately for me, I've found an exercise program that I actually like, which is to slap a *DDR Extreme* disc in my PS2 and then hop around like an idiot for a good half hour. This regimen has two advantages. First, it's excellent aerobic exercise, and thanks to the game's workout mode, I can actually see how many calories I am burning per song (regrettably, not a whole lot—it takes 10 songs or so to burn off a Snickers bar, which puts a Snickers bar in a whole new perspective). Second, it's not boring; perhaps because I took two years of dance (shut up!), hitting dancepad buttons to a beat actually seems like fun. The point is, I'm now doing a half hour of cardiovascular-intensive exercise a day, which, for a guy of my age and habits, is not a bad thing at all.

Clearly I'm not the only one who thinks this way (evidenced by the fact that a calorie-counting workout mode is packed in), but what's interesting is that health insurance providers are beginning to gauge the value of using videogames to inspire kids to exercise. Today's kids are struggling with obesity, like other Americans, but the implications of their obesity are more significant, since people who are obese when they are younger often have more serious health problems as they get older. And like me, many kids these days get bored with exercise...but not with videogames.

This is why the West Virginia Public Employees Insurance Agency launched a $60,000 study earlier this year to see if games like *DDR* can help overweight kids lose weight and keep it off. In the study, the insurance agency covers the cost of the console, the game, and the dancepad. The kids play the game for a certain amount of time, wear a pedometer to keep track of their movement, and keep a log of their exercise. If the study shows that these games can help kids cut their weight, it could have interesting repercussions for two industries: health and gaming. On the healthcare front, one might be able to argue that paying $300 for games now will save hundreds or thousands of dollars in obesity-related health issues later. For gamemakers, well, there's a gold mine waiting to happen in the creation of health-related, physician-prescribed games.

Dance-related games could be just the beginning of the doctor's orders: How about a shooter in which you have to step in order to move forward or back? Fighting games that rely on arm and leg movements? The games and hardware are already out there (or on the way), and the next-gen consoles and their peripherals will likely offer even more control and opportunities for exercise. While videogames will probably never lose their reputation as being for "slackers at a controller"—there will always be more games that require button mashing than actual movement—it's good to see that even if people anecdotally slam videogames for being behind America's obesity problem, there's a recognition that games can be a potential solution to America's obesity problem.

For my part, I'll tell you this: I'm looking quite svelte these days. «

GAMES CAN BE A SOLUTION TO AMERICA'S OBESITY PROBLEM.

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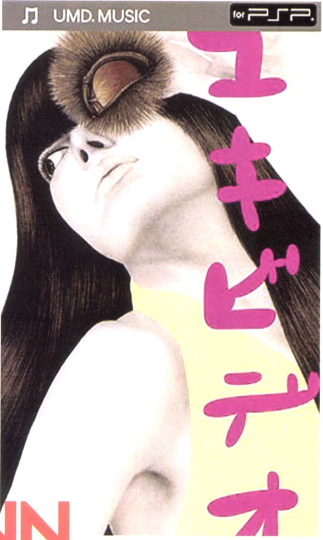
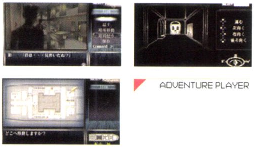


UMD VIDEO

UMD DEMO ON FAMITSU PSP

PSP
体験版UMD
UMD



ADVENTURE PLAYER

J-TOWN

PLAYSTATION NEWS FROM THE EAST

UMD DEMO DISC HITS JAPAN

The second issue of *Famitsu PSP* had a special treat trapped inside its pages: the world's first UMD demo disc! Sony has always claimed that UMDs are cheap to make, and a magazine bundle is nice proof. The actual contents are a bit sparse, with only a playable demo of action-RPG *Tenchi no Mon*. No videos, no music, no game saves—well, there's always Issue #3.

UMD VIDEO KILLED THE MP3 STAR

On UMD—Sony's proprietary disc format for the PSP—games are region free, but UMD videos are highly region restricted; Japan's and America's UMD game markets are largely identical, but the markets for UMD videos have taken rapidly divergent paths. In Japan, the most popular UMD videos aren't Hollywood blockbusters, but music video collections. Right now, there are more video collections available than "regular" movies, with plenty more on the way. Synergy with Sony's Japanese music label and the lack of international licensing issues make them an easy and attractive proposition.

Collections are 2,500 to 4,000 yen (about $23 to $36) and movies are around 4,000 yen. Though high by U.S. standards, these prices are competitive with Japanese DVDs. Each collection includes six to 12 video clips; some include "making of" videos and tour footage, as well. Top-selling artists like Chemistry, Mika Nakajima, Yuki, and Asian Kung-Fu Generation are available on UMD. Music videos are a natural fit for the Japanese marketplace, as most urbanites have a 30- to 60-minute train commute each day—too short for a movie, but just long enough for a few videos.

BUILD AN ADVENTURE!

Old-school adventure games may be dead in the States, but they're alive and well in Japan, where the genre still sells to a small but sustainable audience. Japanese adventure games tend to be dialogue heavy and focus on simple puzzles, character interaction, and branching narratives. The closest Western equivalents would be the old Infocom text adventures or graphic adventures like *Myst* (Ubisoft) or *Escape From Monkey Island* (LucasArts). The best-known Japanese adventure is the dating sim *Tokimeki Memorial*; mystery and horror games also top the list.

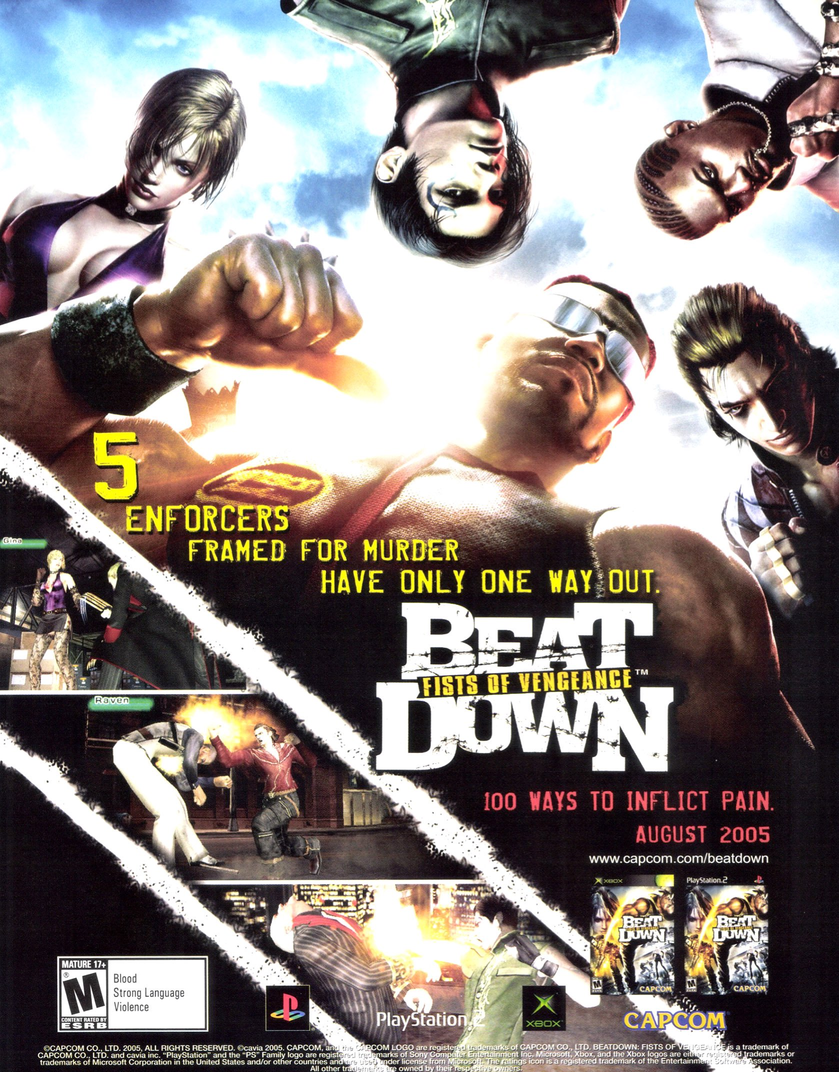
The adventure genre's easily scripted gameplay and high-content/low-cost factor make it a favorite of smaller development houses. And now, From Software (*Armored Core*, *Otogi* for the Xbox) is making adventure-game creation possible for the masses. From's *Adventure Player* software for the PSP lets you create your own adventure games. The software comes with three full adventures, with more than a dozen "mini-adventures" planned for release via download.

Most exciting about *Adventure Player* is ADVP Studio, the PC-based creation tool for your PSP adventures. Previous "creation games," such as *RPG Maker* (Agetec), required gamers to build their games on the target system itself. This made it extremely difficult to use custom graphic and sound resources in the game and made programming and text entry cumbersome. By separating the creation platform and the gameplay platform, *Adventure Player* provides far more freedom than found in previous console-based creation tools. The PSP is the first console—portable or otherwise—to connect easily and freely to the PC. Imagine creating custom car decals in Photoshop or using simple XML to script events in a custom skate park. Simple and free PC connectivity is one of the PSP's secret weapons and one that more developers should take advantage of in their second generation of game software.

THE WORLD'S FIRST UMD DEMO DISC!

EMULATION HITS THE PSP; SONY HITS BACK

When the PSP debuted, Sony proudly announced that it would never force owners to install unwanted firmware upgrades. This noble stance lasted only until hackers started running unsigned software (emulators, for example) on the 1.0 firmware, proving that it's easy to be idealistic when profits aren't on the line. Less than one week later, new games required a firmware upgrade before they would run. The default U.S. firmware, version 1.5, was recently compromised as well—will Sony take the same hard-line stance with its U.S. customers? «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FRAMED FOR MURDER
HAVE ONLY ONE WAY OUT.
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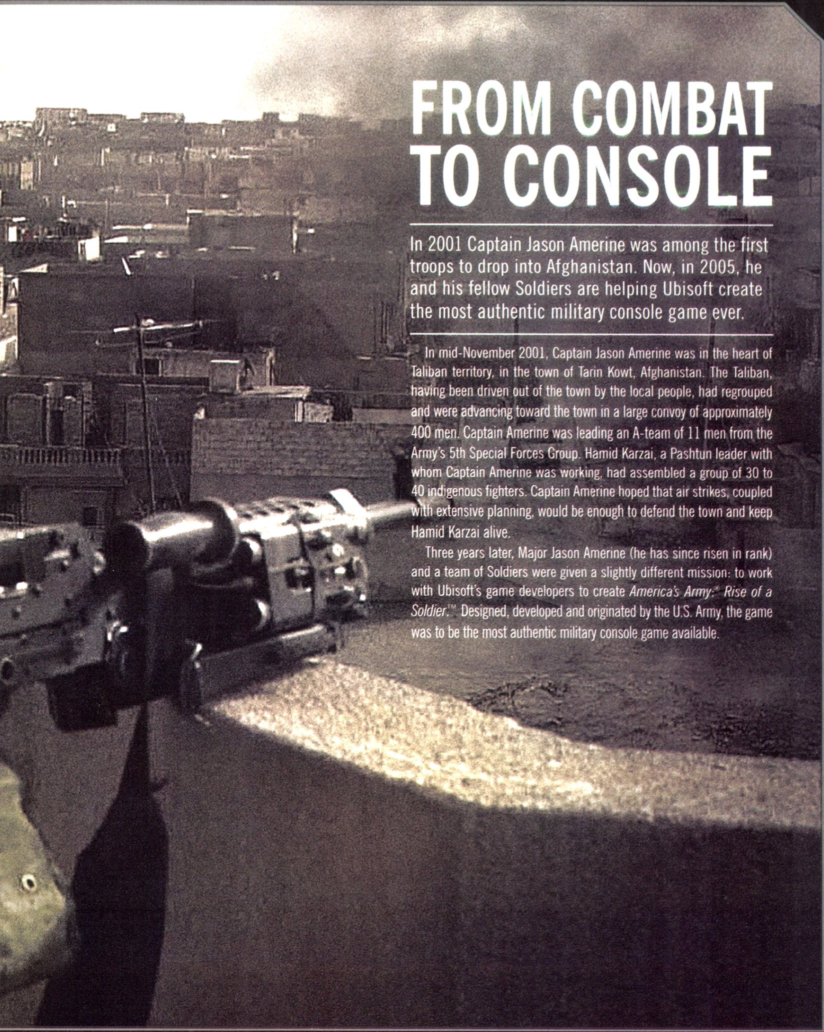


FROM COMBAT TO CONSOLE

In 2001 Captain Jason Amerine was among the first troops to drop into Afghanistan. Now, in 2005, he and his fellow Soldiers are helping Ubisoft create the most authentic military console game ever.

In mid-November 2001, Captain Jason Amerine was in the heart of Taliban territory, in the town of Tarin Kowt, Afghanistan. The Taliban, having been driven out of the town by the local people, had regrouped and were advancing toward the town in a large convoy of approximately 400 men. Captain Amerine was leading an A-team of 11 men from the Army's 5th Special Forces Group. Hamid Karzai, a Pashtun leader with whom Captain Amerine was working, had assembled a group of 30 to 40 indigenous fighters. Captain Amerine hoped that air strikes, coupled with extensive planning, would be enough to defend the town and keep Hamid Karzai alive.

Three years later, Major Jason Amerine (he has since risen in rank) and a team of Soldiers were given a slightly different mission: to work with Ubisoft's game developers to create *America's Army:® Rise of a Soldier.*™ Designed, developed and originated by the U.S. Army, the game was to be the most authentic military console game available.

> **"*America's Army* is the most realistic military game, because it was created by the actual source. Developed by real Army Soldiers and based on real Army missions, this game gives you the true Army Soldier experience."**
> **—Major (r) Chris Chambers, Deputy Project Director**

Major Amerine is outfitted in a tracking outfit designed to capture his movements for the game.

Major Amerine, an avid gamer, began his work with *America's Army* as a Mission Development Officer on the highly successful original PC game. He saw this mission not only as an opportunity to create games he would want to play, but also as a way to communicate the true Army experience.

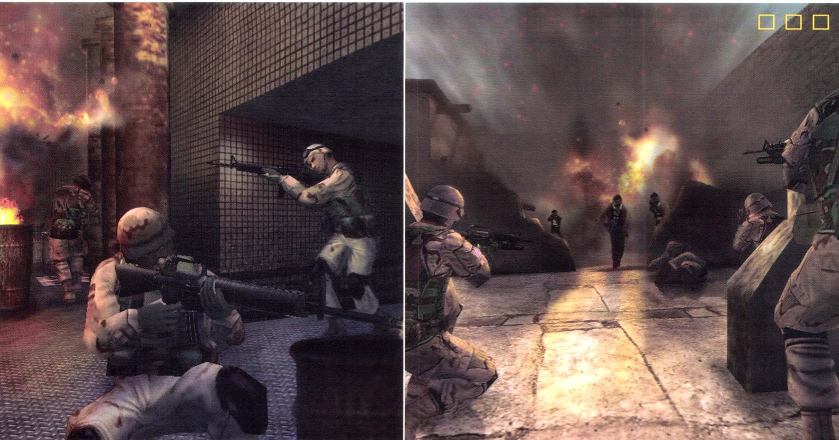
In 2004 the Secretary of the Army entered into an exclusive licensing agreement with Ubisoft to develop the first authentic Army console game. This was something of a historical agreement, as the Army had never before granted this license (and, more pointedly, the unparalleled access to the Army's vast assets and resources that came with it) to any console game publisher. However, in order to ensure *Rise of a Soldier* maintained the Army's rigorous standards of authenticity and realism, the Army maintained creative oversight.

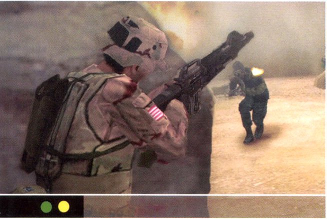
During the creation of *Rise of a Soldier* with Ubisoft developers, Major Amerine and a team of Special Forces Soldiers helped to construct missions faithful to their real-life experience in Special Forces. "[Ubisoft] wanted to make something unique," Major Amerine said of the developers. "So I went to them with my list of the things I wanted. And what was really cool was they had very similar ideas. They did an incredible job—in a way it felt like being Special Forces again."

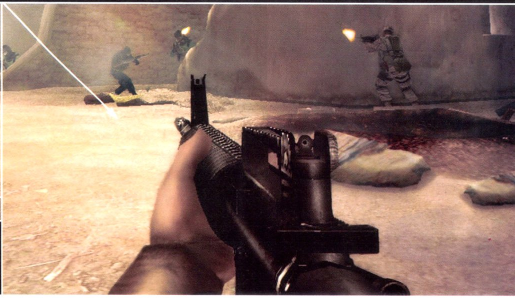
Major Amerine was also eager to prevent the usual flaws in military games from creeping into *Rise of a Soldier*. "One of the biggest things you learn about moving on the battlefield is to get down," he explained. "If somebody's shooting at you, you want to get down. In a lot of the games they actually reward you for not getting down, but jumping around and doing all this silly stuff that you'd get shot doing."

Creating strategies and evaluating objectives within the *Rise of a Soldier* gameplay actually mimicked the decision-making process of a Sergeant during a mission: maps and 3D images were

Success in a game mission, just as in the real world, requires making smart, quick decisions in the heat of battle.







Elements within the game are digital replicas of environments, equipment and weapons found in Afghanistan.

> **"In real-world tactics there's no right or wrong...But those are choices you have to make on the battlefield. And in the game, it works exactly the same way."**
> **—Captain Erich Fellenz, Mission Development Officer**

evaluated for cover and concealment, overwatch, and ability to support other fire teams—precisely the type of planning all Army leaders perform in their real-world missions. Knowing where to put your men and when to put them there "is something that comes from, quite honestly, years of experience in doing it on the ground," says Army Special Forces Captain Erich Fellenz, Mission Development Officer for the game.

Being able to form a game based on these real-life experiences is what gives *Rise of a Soldier* its edge. To further their knowledge and understanding of an Army Soldier's life, the developers were sent to Fort Lewis in Washington state and Fort McClellan, Alabama, where they received training and experienced mock combat missions. Weighed down with combat gear, the developers were taught how to assemble, load and fire an M4 Assault Rifle; they were also treated to a lesson in room clearing and advanced urban combat, complete with live (and loud) ammunition. All of this was done to ensure the console game was not only optimized for console game play, but also unique and authentic enough to be an Army game.

One of the most distinctive aspects of *Rise of a Soldier* is Career mode, which allows players to experience just what it takes to become a high-ranking enlisted leader in the United States Army. This feature is just as detailed as every other in the game, having been informed by the experiences of the Soldiers working on the game. The Soldier begins as a basic rifleman and progresses by accumulating experience and developing value-based skills until

Developers used photos taken by Major Amerine and Major (r) Chris Chambers during Operation Enduring Freedom to meticulously recreate every battlefield detail, from battle-worn weaponry to the clothing of indigenous forces.

CAREER MODE

Do you have what it takes to be a Special Forces Team Leader?

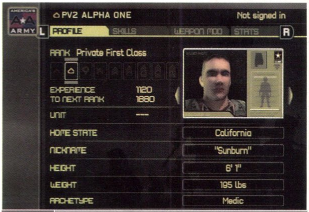
> **"In *Rise of a Soldier* players can actually create a persistent character online and build him from match to match."**
> **—Major (r) Chris Chambers, Deputy Project Director**

Career mode takes you through a career in the U.S. Army, from rifleman through Special Forces. At the outset of the single-player and multiplayer game, players create a Soldier from unique faces, home states and corresponding regional accents as diverse as the Army itself. The Soldier then, like a real Army Soldier, has a distinct way of interacting with others.

Players rise through the ranks by completing Missions and acquiring Experience Points. Experience Points are then used to raise your in-game Soldier Skills. For example, raise your leadership points and you'll increase the skills of the Soldiers under your command; raise your marksmanship points and improve your accuracy. These skills are an authentic, although partial, reflection of what it takes to succeed in the Army and advance in rank.

Missions are not evaluated by number of bad guys killed. They are completed when a player accomplishes a mission and has acquired skills up to Army standards. That means making smart decisions, staying calm under fire and working with the team in order to achieve the objective.

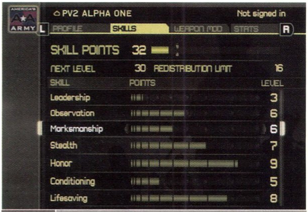
As a Soldier moves through combat, the Combat Effectiveness Meter (CEM) provides a real-time assessment of your skill levels. For example, players' shooting effectiveness suffers as a result of poor movement and positioning and when they are under heavy fire. If a player is less physically fit or unable to provide necessary medical attention, this is also reflected in player performance. Players can improve their effectiveness by quickly rectifying their mistakes (e.g., get into the prone position if shooting) or by further developing their Soldier Skills.



PV2 ALPHA ONE Not signed in

RANK Private First Class
EXPERIENCE 1120
TO NEXT RANK 1880
UNIT ----
HOME STATE California
NICKNAME "Sunburn"
HEIGHT 6' 1"
WEIGHT 195 lbs
ARCHETYPE Medic

Your profile is like a virtual dog tag, listing your vital information.

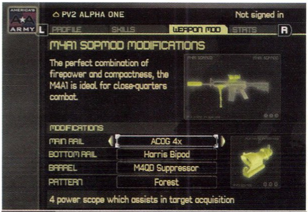


PV2 ALPHA ONE Not signed in

SKILL POINTS 32
NEXT LEVEL 30 REDISTRIBUTION LIMIT 16

SKILL	POINTS	LEVEL
Leadership		3
Observation		6
Marksmanship		6
Stealth		7
Honor		9
Conditioning		5
Lifesaving		8

Use Experience Points to raise your Soldier's skills online and offline.



PV2 ALPHA ONE Not signed in

M4A1 SOPMOD MODIFICATIONS

The perfect combination of firepower and compactness, the M4A1 is ideal for close-quarters combat.

MODIFICATIONS
MAIN RAIL ACOG 4x
BOTTOM RAIL Harris Bipod
BARREL M4QD Suppressor
PATTERN Forest

4 power scope which assists in target acquisition

Customize your weapon to fit your individual style or to meet the demands of a particular mission.

he has what it takes to be a Special Forces Operations Sergeant.

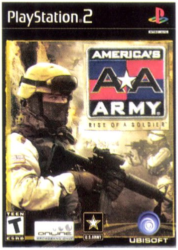
Missions are replayable, allowing players to develop their Soldier Skills in their current role. But with every rise in rank, more missions are unlocked, and the complexity of the duties grows accordingly. Captain Fellenz described this progression and expansion in his own career as a Soldier. After his time in the Infantry, he trained to become a Ranger ("because that was the hardest training I could find"), then, once eligible, advanced to Special Forces.

As for Major Amerine, he succeeded in accomplishing his Mission Objectives by training, using maps to plan tactics, working closely with indigenous forces and, above all, providing leadership and performing honorably. Tarin Kowt remained free from Taliban control and Hamid Karzai became the president of Afghanistan.

Having risen through the ranks of the U.S. Army and established themselves as Soldiers worthy of the Army's Special Forces, these Soldiers, you can be sure, gave everything they had in their work with *Rise of a Soldier.* Besides, for the Soldiers working on this project, *Rise of a Soldier* is more than just the development of a game, but a reflection of their lives and experiences as true Army Soldiers.

Pre-order *America's Army: Rise of a Soldier* at www.riseofasoldier.com. ☐

Coming October 2005



☐ ☐ ☐

Major Randy Zeegers, Army Subject Matter Expert, twice deployed to Afghanistan in Operation Enduring Freedom.

Then-Captain Jason Amerine, pictured with Special Forces and indigenous fighters in Afghanistan (blurred to protect their identity), worked with game developers to accurately recreate the Army Soldier experience.

PlayStation 2

ONLINE BROADBAND ONLY

XBOX

XBOX LIVE ONLINE ENABLED

TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Blood
Violence

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U.S.ARMY

UBISOFT

KINGDOM HEARTS II

CAN SQUARE-ENIX MAKE RPG MAGIC AGAIN?

W**hen Square Enix** announced the first *Kingdom Hearts*, the concept of a role-playing game starring Disney characters sounded about as appealing as those direct-to-video sequels Disney keeps pumping out. Everyone expected a watered-down adventure full of squirrels and flowers and joy, but instead Square Enix provided an epic adventure that demonstrates how to smartly use Disney's library of heroes, fools, and villains. No surprise that a best-selling game with a cliff-hanger ending is finally being continued with a grander, more animated, and more colorful sequel.

So far, director Tetsuya Nomura has been very tight-lipped about the story. He steadfastly refused to talk to us about Mickey, Riku, and that weird blond-haired kid that keeps popping up in the game's trailers; he wouldn't even tell us how the game begins. Which, as much as it frustrated us, makes sense: Why spoil the story of a game that's going to be a little darker and more complex than its predecessor? We're not going to ruin any mysteries, but we will show you where Sora's story will take you. So just turn the page for your grand tour of the Magic Kingdom....

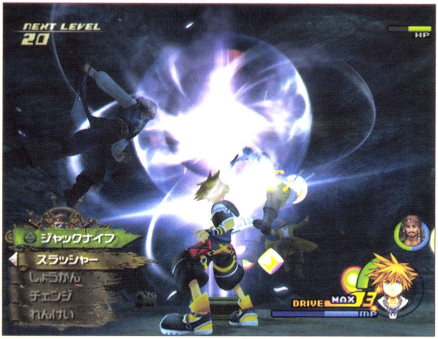
★

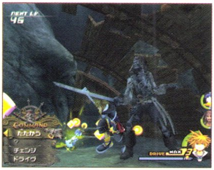
KINGDOM HEARTS: THE TWO-MINUTE SUMMARY

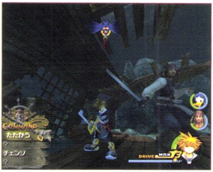
Sora and his buddy Riku are chilling with their mutual friend Kairi when their home is attacked by the Heartless, and they are separated. At the same time, Donald and Goofy find out that King Mickey is leaving on a journey to save the kingdom's worlds, and he tells the pair to find the boy who holds the key. Coincidentally enough, Sora is mysteriously dumped into Traverse Town with a keyblade in his hand. He meets Donald and Goofy, and the trio zip around to Disney-based worlds in order to lock the keyholes (which prevents the Heartless from attacking).

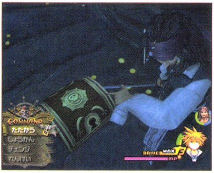
At some point, Sora finds out that the Disney villain Maleficent (from *Sleeping Beauty*) has manipulated Riku into becoming one of the Heartless. In fact, Riku has become possessed by Ansem (a king who went crazy and became the leader of the Heartless), and Sora ends up fighting Ansem at the End of the World (where worlds that have been conquered by the Heartless die). After Ansem is defeated, the door to the final world, the Kingdom Hearts (the heart of all worlds), is opened. Mickey and Riku suddenly appear, step inside the door to Kingdom Hearts, and close it behind them, vanishing from Sora.

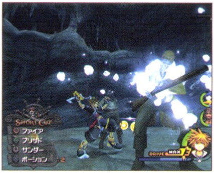
The GBA game, *Kingdom Hearts: Chain of Memories*, starts off where *KH* ended. Sora is told to journey to Castle Oblivion, but along the way he runs into the Organization. The Organization uses a witch named Namine to erase Sora's memories, and two of the members (Marluxia and Larxene) decide to use Sora to eliminate the other members and take control themselves. However, redheaded Axel (who's shown in *KH2* screens) takes out the two traitors and disappears. Sora meets Namine and saves her from the Organization; she tells him that in order for him to get his memories back, he'll need to forget about her and everything that happened in *Chain of Memories*. The game ends with Sora and his friends falling asleep in a giant flowerlike doohickey.

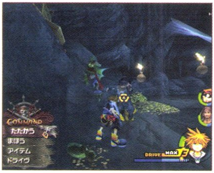












PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN

BRING ON THE EYE PATCHES

In a singular shocking surprise, the world of *Pirates of the Caribbean* was revealed in the *KH2* E3 2005 trailer. It's not a mere fleeting cameo, with a few seconds of Johnny Depp waving "hi" to Sora—it's a full-on world with Captain Jack Sparrow fighting alongside Sora, Donald, and Goofy. One can see that in some screens, Sparrow is in his very human and Depp-ish form; in others, Sparrow is a walking zombie pirate. Whether you control the shifts between normal and zombie Jack, or whether the change happens automatically beneath the moonlight, remains to be seen.

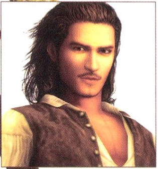
In an interview with 1UP.com, Nomura elaborates a bit on his surprise use of the live-action movie *Pirates of the Caribbean*: "In *Kingdom Hearts*, I think the *Nightmare Before Christmas* world was one of the unexpected worlds, but we knew that in order to wow our fans, we needed to put something in that was more unexpected. So I would think that *Pirates of the Caribbean* has a bigger impact, and that it's totally unexpected for Sora and his friends to come in touch with real human characters."

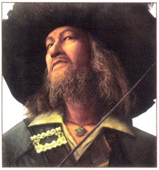
What about the fact that Pirates is a live-action movie? Were the actors substituted with cartoony doppelgängers to maintain the *KH* look? Actually, the characters look the same in the game as they do in the movie. Nomura comments, "Take *Roger Rabbit*, for example—there are those types of characters, the Sora and Disney-type characters mixed in with the real human characters, even in the Disney world. So we didn't see it as a huge challenge; all we wanted to do was to make sure the quality of the humanlike character was going to be close to or almost exactly the same as what has been shown in the movie.... Most of our staff has worked on *Final Fantasy* all the way up to *FFX*. So if you look at *FFX* and the characters we used in that title, you can probably say we're actually used to re-creating more humanlike characters than the ones you see in *KH*. For us it's like working on something we've already mastered."

> "WE NEEDED SOMETHING UNEXPECTED."

The Caribbean is a pretty big place, but all the art so far focuses mostly on either the pirate ship the *Black Pearl* or the treasure cave from the end of the movie. With the lovely Keira Knightley being one of the only female actors in the whole movie, it's safe to assume that her character, Elizabeth Swann, is the princess that Sora and his crew have to protect. (Although that's also assuming the Heartless still want to steal the hearts of princesses to open the door to the heart of all worlds.) In any case, we can't wait to see what kinds of crazy dialogue come forth when you put Johnny Depp and Donald Duck in the same room.

エリザベスをさらったのは
海賊バルボッサの手下たちだ





でもな キーブレードを使う小僧たちと
出会ったら気をつけろよ

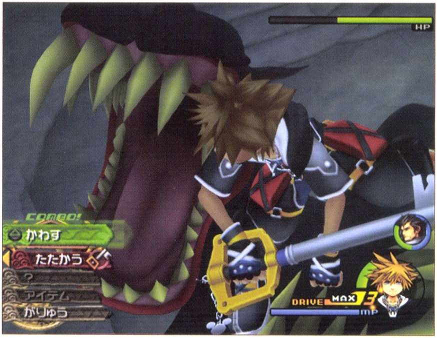
TALK TO ME

So, does this mean that Johnny Depp, Keira Knightley, Orlando Bloom, and Geoffrey Rush are in the game? Ideally, yes, but that's not part of Nomura's department. In fact, while Square Enix is focusing on game design and production, Disney is in charge of "little" details like voice casting. Disney handles both the Disney character voice talent (the official voices of Donald Duck, Mickey, etc.) and movie actors like James Woods and Haley Joel Osment. We're hoping that the fact that *Kingdom Hearts* has already sold millions means that Disney is able to pony up whatever crazy demands that Depp and the gang might set forth.

Even though Disney is responsible for rounding up the talent, Nomura and his team have the final pass in terms of whether the voices (especially the ones of the non-Disney characters, like Sora, Auron, or Riku) sound "right" to them.

WHAT IS PETE'S DEAL?

Who is Pete? You might remember him as Peg Leg Pete, Mickey's first nemesis in *Steamboat Willie*. Pete is an interesting villain, because he's one of the only Disney villains who can antagonize people outside of his film's world. You won't see Scar harass Ariel, nor Hades messing with Snow White, but Pete has tussled with Mickey, Donald, and even Goofy. His flexibility and presence in *Kingdom Hearts II* could possibly mean he'll be a constant foe to be reckoned with in each world. Some fans have theorized that he replaces Maleficent in the role of "overarching bad dude calling the shots," but we lean toward the interpretation of Pete as Hades' main thug, which explains why he's in almost every world, including one key scene in which he and Hades are scheming. His appearance also lends credence to the rumor that *Steamboat Willie* is a playable world; what would be a better place for the face-off between Disney's first hero and villain than the very first cartoon they both starred in?



COMMAND
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HERCULES

PUTS THE "GLAD" IN GLADIATOR

Not every world is completely new, as evidenced by the fact that Sora journeys to the world from *Hercules* again. However, Sora only saw part of Olympus in the last game (namely, the Coliseum), and he'll now explore a whole different facet of *Hercules'* world in *Kingdom Hearts II*—the Underworld. So technically, even though Sora has been to this world before, the level is still all new to him.

Nomura explains that the wholly new locations in a previously visited world are a side effect of the general improvement that *KH2* brings over *KH*. "It's actually hard to say what one element has improved from the original to *Kingdom Hearts II*, and I'll say with confidence is that it's powered up in all levels," he says. "One of the reasons for that is that the engine is completely new and built from scratch. I had estimated that the original engine could be used for the sequel, but when I actually went to each department within my team, everyone had new ideas that they wanted to implement. So even though you see the same world in *Kingdom Hearts II* as in [*KH*], you're going to see that the map, the textures, everything, have been re-created, and we didn't use anything from the first one."

While discussing the use of the new engine, the subject of cel shading, and the *Kingdom Hearts* franchise's lack of it, came up. Nomura explains, "We had a very long discussion about how the artwork was going to be portrayed in the original. A lot of games coming out around that time were using the cel-shading technique, so obviously one reason we didn't go for the cel-shaded look was that we wouldn't be separated from those other games. We wanted to create a large gap between ourselves and everyone else who was using cel shading. Also, cel shading isn't something that is done with your own two hands or 10 fingers, but something pregenerated. What we have done is created something very original and unique, and I say with confidence that we have the technique to do so, and that the result isn't something that anyone can copy."

Not only is the Underworld a new place in a familiar world, but this area also introduces a familiar character from *Final Fantasy X*, Auron. Even though Auron doesn't carry a sake jug anymore, he is still quite the badass and can pull off a pretty powerful combo attack with Sora. Combo attacks are similar to the summons of other games: powerful moves with slick visuals where Sora teams up with a new party member (like Auron, Captain Sparrow, or Mulan) and basically takes out anything in the surrounding area. For example, Sora and Auron perform a Bushido attack, which stacks several sword strikes before culminating in some crazy sword-whirlwind frenzy that slices everything around the two (the attack is performed by successfully timing Reaction command presses). It's also in the Underworld where we see Hades consorting with Pete, and Hades tries to have Auron kill Sora at one point.

AURON IS STILL QUITE THE BADASS.

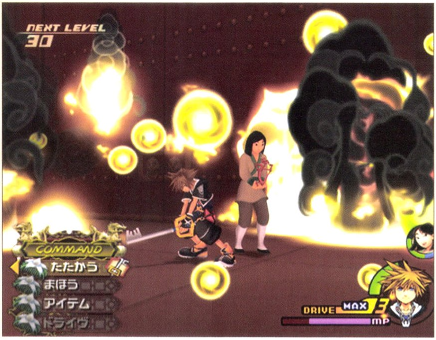
BATTLE DIRECTOR YUICHI KANEMORI ON COMBAT

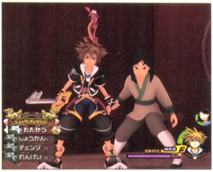
OPM What battle systems from other games do you like; do any of them influence *KH2's* fighting system?

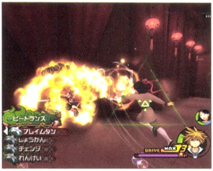
Yuichi Kanemori I like RPGs, but if we're talking influence, maybe fighting games? The various types of fighting games and their structures are interesting—especially the direct response you get from controlling the character and how you implement that exhilarating feeling you get from your moves. Shooting games are also some of my favorites, and I've had some influences from those games.

OPM What was your favorite boss battle in the original *KH*?

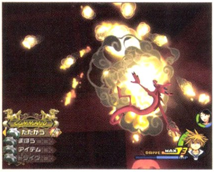
YK The Maleficent Dragon boss battle—the overwhelming sense of existence and power is what I liked.

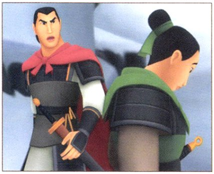






"I HAD FORM CHANGE IN MIND FOR THE ORIGINAL GAME."





MULAN

ONCE UPON A DYNASTY

Another slight surprise is the trip to the world of the film *Mulan*. It seems pretty obvious that Mulan herself is the princess to be saved in this world (then again, Nomura could be tricky and make Grandmother Fa the real princess), and Sora's adventure integrates quite smoothly into *Mulan*'s world. For example, a key scene in the original film focuses on Mulan creating an avalanche to sweep over Shan-Yu's army. In *Kingdom Hearts II*, Sora, Goofy, Donald, and Mulan are placed in a similar situation, except this time Shan-Yu's army consists of just flying Heartless. Mulan uses the same trick of firing a cannon at a mountain, except you get a screen full of Heartless being wiped out instead of a screen full of angry Huns.

Our look at the "Land of Dragons" provided a fantastic demonstration of the new tweaks and features that have been made to *KH2*'s combat system. For example, there are many tough Heartless in Mulan's village; before the previously mentioned avalanche against the Heartless, Sora has to survive two minutes against hundreds upon hundreds of flying Heartless onscreen simultaneously. Such overwhelming numbers necessitate Sora using the Form Change to boost his power and take on all the Heartless.

The Form Change is when Sora fuses with either Goofy or Donald. Fusing with Goofy results in the Valor Form, in which Sora wields two keyblades; fusing with Donald brings about the Wisdom Form, which presumably helps Sora excel at casting magic. So why wouldn't you just stay permanently fused to make the whole game easier? Well, you have to maintain your Drive gauge, which drains your, er, drive, steadily as you fight in either form. Nomura lets on about the Form Change's origin: "There are a good amount of elements that we've idealized beforehand and can now execute. One example is the Form Change, so that's actually not a brand-new idea, as I already had that in mind for the original game."

Battle Director Yuichi Kanemori specifies other new elements to the battle system: "The Reaction command using the Triangle button [a reflex-based, context-sensitive attack where, by pressing Triangle when told, Sora executes a special attack based on the enemy he's fighting], combo attack with your party members, and the ability to switch your party members in and out. I believe this new battle system will add an entirely new look and feel and make the game more enjoyable. The camera has been rearranged, taking into consideration the overall balance of the playability and presence when moving around the field, but it also maintains the impact you felt through the camera in the original game." And yes, you can control the camera with the right analog stick.

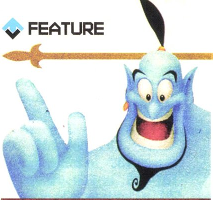
SCENARIO WRITER KAZUSHIGE NOJIMA ON STORY

OPM Is writing for *Kingdom Hearts II* easier than writing for the first game was?

Kazushige Nojima There were both merits and demerits. I suppose I can compare it to making a dish or cooking—when making an original dish, choosing the right ingredients for it is harder than actually making it. For the sequel, what's difficult is not finding the ingredients but making something different out of the ingredients you already have in front of you.

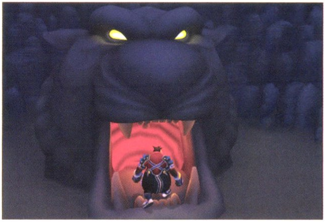
OPM What other written work influences you? Basically, what kind of stuff does a scenario writer read?

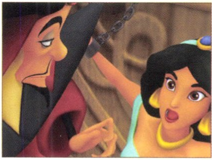
KN As for books, you can find many introductory-type books around me...*Introduction to French*, *Introduction to Archeology*, *Introduction to Home Improvement*, and *Introduction to Scenario Writing*.... [*Laughs*] Recently, I've been watching a lot of Korean movies. I like TV dramas, and I also watch *Nash Bridges* every day. I want to become like Nash!



ALADDIN
JAFAR RETURNS

It seems as though Jafar wasn't put down for good back in the original *Kingdom Hearts*. What's most interesting about this sequence is the presence of Pete in many screenshots, especially the one of him walking into the Cave of Wonders (which is where the lamp was originally stored). Considering that there is a screen of Jafar as an evil genie floating around, it seems like Pete is sent to Agrabah just to free Jafar and perhaps help him get his vengeance upon Sora and the gang. Again, this leads credence to the theory that Hades sits in the Underworld and calls the shots while Pete ends up being the guy who actually goes places and does dirty deeds.





COMMAND
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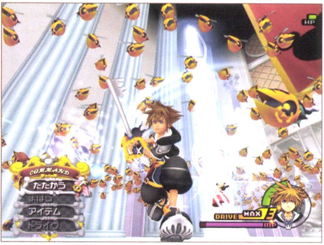
しょうかん
チェンジ
れんけい
DRIVE
MAX
3
MP

ジャファーが復活したら アグラバーは
大変なことになっちゃうぞ

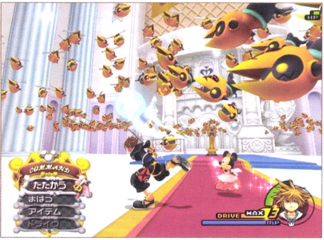
DISNEY CASTLE
HEARTLESS ATTACK

Even the safe haven of the Disney Castle is attacked by the Heartless in *Kingdom Hearts II*. Merely glimpsed in the previous game, the Disney Castle is now a full-fledged level, and by the looks of it, an action-packed one. Whoever is attacking the castle (whether it's Heartless or the mysterious Organization introduced in *Kingdom Hearts: Chain of Memories*) has got some serious firepower and/or excellent intelligence, if they know both where the castle is and that it's been unguarded since King Mickey, Donald, and Goofy left. We're not entirely sure if Sora and crew have to protect both Minnie and Daisy or just one, but all the screens tend to show either panic or massive attack, which makes this part of the game look like a frenzied defense against a blitzkrieg attack.



イバラが生えてきて
痛いんです!

これは ややこしい
いや 由々しき問題じゃ――

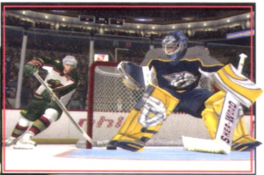


王様からの手紙に書いてありましたよ
とても勇敢な少年だと

Bring it.

DALLAS STARS
CCM
Heaton

#1 rated NHL game.
—gamerankings.com



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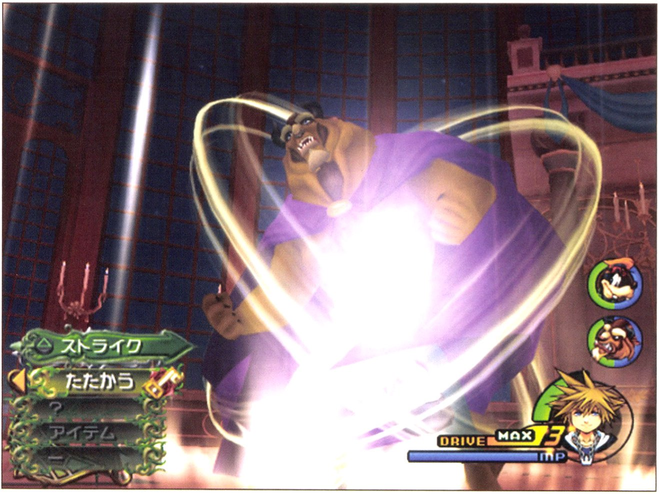
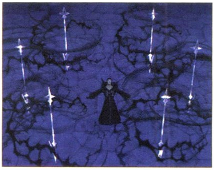


MORE WORLDS?

Nomura is being pretty tight-lipped about what other worlds are going to be in *Kingdom Hearts II*, and while we'd love for a whole level to be based on *Lilo & Stitch* (the idea of Sora chilling in Hawaii and doing combo attacks with the homicidal Stitch is just plain cool), we have two pretty convincing leads: *The Little Mermaid* and *Steamboat Willie*. *The Little Mermaid* is one of Disney's signature movies (and it was on a world list that was accidentally leaked onto the Internet), and *Steamboat Willie* was the first cartoon that Mickey starred in, and Mickey is a more prominent character in this installment.

ストライク
シャウト
アイテム
DRIVE
MAX
3
MP

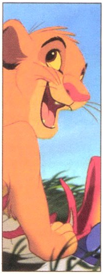
キングダムハーツを手に入れた時
我らは完全な存在となるのだ



BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

BE THEIR GUEST

Kingdom Hearts included the characters of Beast and Belle, but the two of them were shown away from their home. This time, Sora gets the chance to step inside Beast's castle. He even runs into Beast's bizarre entourage of candles and silverware (so expect snooty little Lumiere and Cogsworth to make appearances in the game). One of the confirmed matches is a fight against a Heartless mini-boss that turns out to be an evil door within the cellars of Beast's castle, which we assume means that the Heartless are guarding something valuable down below. There are also scenes of the mysterious hooded man talking to Beast and tempting him with the same enchanted rose that determines whether Beast will ever become human or not.



LION KING

THE CALL OF THE WILD?

Nomura has heavily hinted at Pride Rock making an appearance in the game. First off, he's told people in numerous interviews, "Worlds like *Lion King*, where we only had Simba as a summon in the original *KH*, will be an actual world in *Kingdom Hearts II*." OK, he might have just used that as an example, but then again, consider the fact that Nomura just loves lions. Furthermore, since he loves lions, it turns out that Simba is, in fact, his favorite Disney character. Perhaps this is a world that he wanted to use originally, but was denied for some reason, and is now finally able to integrate it into the sequel. This makes us wonder if Jeremy Irons (who voiced Scar in the movie) will grace the game with his voice. A voice gig for *KH2* has got to be better than doing the *Dungeons & Dragons* movie, right?

NOMURA

THE HEART OF THE GAME

In 1991, a then-21-year-old Tetsuya Nomura applied for a job at Square Enix. It's been said that his admiration for Yoshitaka Amano's artwork for the *Final Fantasy* series inspired him to apply at Square, and his first job was as one of the monster designers for *Final Fantasy V*. He quietly worked on the monsters until he got a chance to design actual characters for *Final Fantasy VII*; he happened to be the creator behind some minor characters such as Cloud Strife and Aerith Gainsborough. After that, he continued to create characters for Square, and he even directed some of the more famous sequences in *Final Fantasy VIII* (the opening movie and the ballroom dance scene). *Kingdom Hearts* marked his first time in the lead director's chair.

OPM How has the working relationship between Disney and Square Enix changed from *KH* to *Kingdom Hearts II*?
TETSUYA NOMURA Most of the staff that were working on the Disney [side] when we created the original, they're all gone. I don't know how to interpret that. [At a recent meeting with Disney], they commented, "Oh, with this ending, are we going to be able to continue this series?" And that's not something I expected them to say.

OPM Since you were an artist before becoming a director, does that affect your work as a director?
TN I think the biggest advantage, and probably my specialty, is that [since I'm] both a director and an artist, if I have something arty in my head, I can put it down as a visual item and not just explain it in words or in programming code. It creates a goal for all my staff in their different departments that I can already show them what I'm looking for in the product. That's my specialty, and I believe that when you have a goal, you should be able to show it visually to everyone. To be able to communicate that not only through words, but through my drawings and artwork, is what groups everyone together in my staff. Another one is that for all the trailers for all of my products, I'm literally there, directing the trailers. That's another advantage, because I'm able to take what I'm thinking in my head and portray it in the actual trailer. You probably didn't know that, but I'm there, editing every frame of the trailer.

OPM What games do you like?
TN I have to confess, I don't play a lot of games. There are some particular types I play, but that's about it.

Speed
Slow
Haste
Stop

Karl Boss
Bartz 125
Galuf 76
Faris 76
Reina 82

TETSUYA NOMURA'S RÉSUMÉ

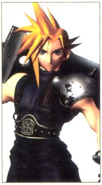
MONSTER DESIGNER
Final Fantasy V

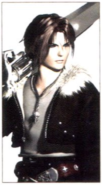
GRAPHIC DIRECTOR
Final Fantasy VI

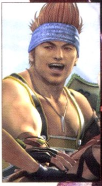
CHARACTER DESIGNER
Parasite Eve
Parasite Eve II
Brave Fencer Musashi
Samurai Legend Musashi
Ehrgeiz
The Bouncer

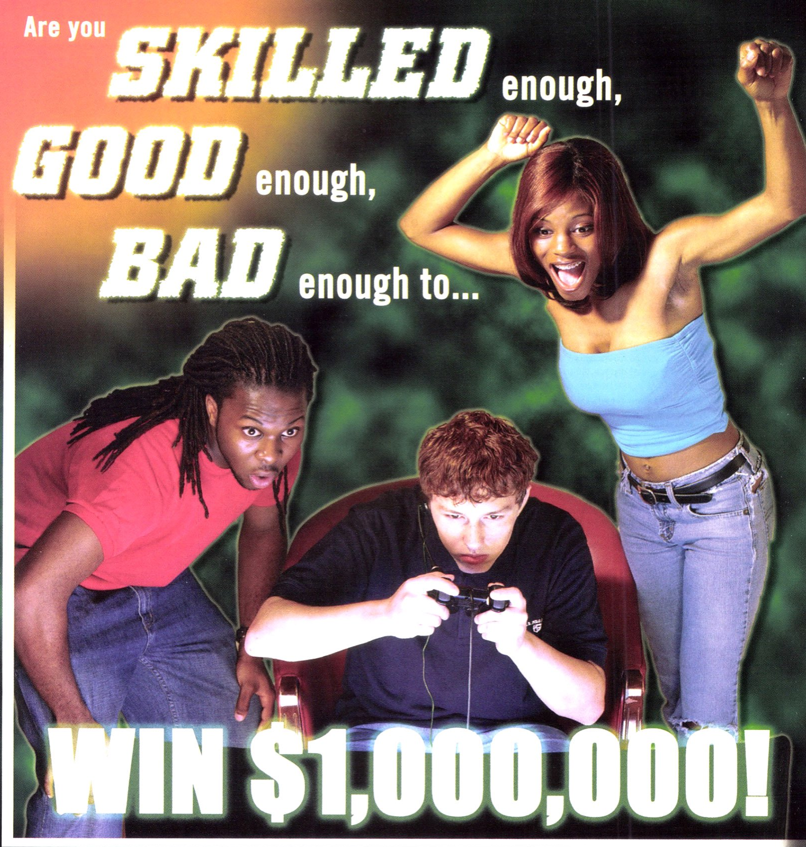
MAIN CHARACTER DESIGNER
Final Fantasy VII
Final Fantasy VIII
Final Fantasy X
Final Fantasy X-2

DIRECTOR & CHARACTER DESIGNER
Kingdom Hearts
Kingdom Hearts II









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- Player registers for a tournament by choosing a console, and a particular game.
- Players are organized into groups of 10.
- Each player plays every other player within this group.
- Players will participate in a minimum of 9 games each time they register. Each 9 game set is called a round.
- Player with the best record in each round advances to the next round.
- Prizes are awarded to the winners of each round.
- Prizes will be awarded accordingly. Round one prize will be $10, round two $100, round three $1000, round four $10,000.)
- The number of rounds will be determined by the number of participants in a given tournament.
- Tournaments will grow in increments of 1000 players.
- Player standing in EGamingleague will be based on a point accumulation system. (ie. Most rounds won, most games won, highest points scored, etc.).
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- The grand prize for the World Cup Championship may be as high as $1,000,000.
- The World Cup Championship winners will be featured in magazine, websites, and possibly television.

REVIEWS

84>

OFFICIAL U.S. PLAYSTATION MAGAZINE [★] GAME OF THE MONTH

MADDEN 06

THE LAST MAN STANDING IS STILL THE KING

RATING KEY
Octagons. Stomps. Ocs. Blargs. Call our rating symbols what you will—just know that any game that receives five of 'em is something truly special that deserves a spot in your collection. On the other hand, a 2.5 is merely mediocre. And a 0.5? Well...at least they're fun to rip apart.

[●●●●●]

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ATTACK OF THE CHEESEHEADS
OFFICIAL U.S. PLAYSTATION MAGAZINE
GAME OF THE MONTH

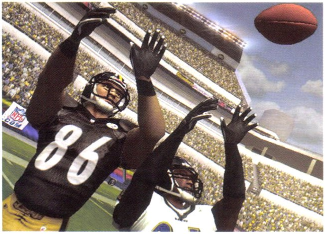
MADDEN NFL 06

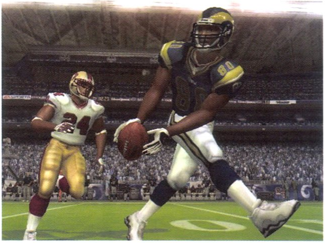
THE NOW AND FOR-THE-FORESEEABLE-FUTURE KING CONTINUES ITS REIGN

When Electronic Arts nabbed exclusive NFL rights earlier this year, there was concern that since the company was now the only game in town, it would rest on its laurels with its *Madden* franchise. One only has to play *Madden NFL 06* a few times to realize these fears were unwarranted, as *Madden* follows a familiar—albeit safe—tune. The team at Tiburon did what it has done the past few years with its goliath of a series: It added some gameplay enhancements and other tweaks to further polish the *Madden* experience.

The biggest change you'll notice this year is QB vision control, which takes the form of a cone that emanates from the QB and represents his range of vision and perception of his receivers. The size of the cone depends on the skill of the QB. For example, dynasty-building passer Tom Brady has a field of vision that stretches practically from sideline to sideline; a journeyman backup QB, meanwhile, has a range of vision a sliver of that size. The goal is to have your receiver in this area—done by either hitting the right analog stick to swing the cone back and forth or holding R2 and then pressing the receiver's corresponding button to lock on to him—lest you incur an accuracy penalty.

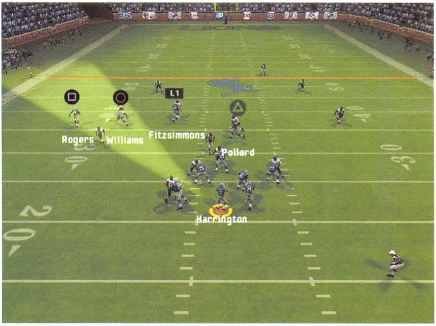
Adjusting to QB vision control isn't too tough. Passing still involves dropping back, checking the primary receiver, then scoping the secondary receivers, as necessary, before taking the additional step of making sure the receiver is within the cone. It really doesn't add much to the game, nor will it likely change many gamers' play style—it didn't change mine—and if it happens to do so in a negative way, you can always shut it off. The changes that have a greater impact on gameplay and incrementally improve the series are more subtle. By pressing the D-pad or left analog stick as your QB releases the ball, you can place passes away from defenders—throwing the ball low or to the outside, though I often found myself placing it in the direction I was running—but only when throwing to receivers in your field of vision. An addition to the hot route system, smart

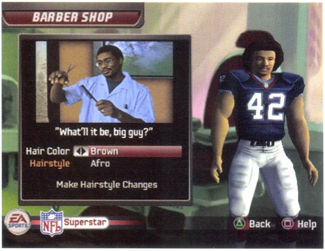




PSPOTENTIAL

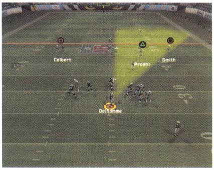
A promising feature we weren't able to try out is the PSP system link. By transferring franchise mode data to your PSP, you can play a week of a season on the portable system and then send the info back to your PS2 when you're done. Check back for our review of *Madden* on PSP to see if this feature is as cool as it sounds.

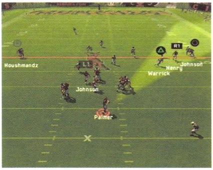


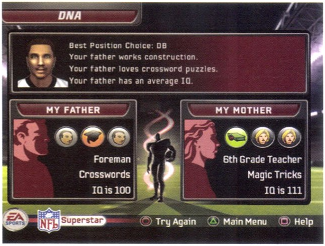


"What'll it be, big guy?"

Hair Color Brown
Hairstyle Afro







Best Position Choice: QB
Your father works construction.
Your father loves crossword puzzles.
Your father has an average IQ.

MY FATHER: Foreman, Crosswords, IQ is 100
MY MOTHER: 6th Grade Teacher, Magic Tricks, IQ is 111

routes, allows you to send your receiver to the first-down marker before he finishes his route. Then there's the truck stick, which is kind of the offense's version of last year's defense-focused hit stick. By hitting up on the right analog stick while in possession of the ball, you can deliver a big hit on defenders to attempt to break tackles, which gives a nice boost to the better-than-ever running game.

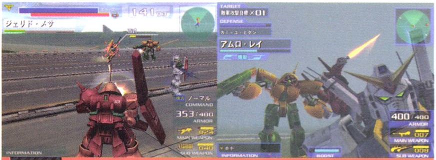
The other big addition offers a nice contrast to the traditional franchise mode, which returns as fully featured and deep as ever. In NFL superstar mode, instead on focusing on the fortunes of one team, you instead follow the career of a character you create (or import from *NFL Street 2* or *NCAA Football 06*). To create a character, you choose a set of parents, whose traits will help mold the type of player your created character becomes. During your career, among other things, you'll take an IQ test, get drafted, tweak your appearance, lobby to play in the Madden Bowl, hire and fire agents, accomplish season and career goals, and even audition for movie roles. While it doesn't add anything to the gameplay, it's an enjoyable mode, similar to *NCAA 06*'s race for the Heisman mode.

Though *Madden 06* isn't facing the stiff competition of recent years and doesn't feature any particular revolutionary gameplay enhancements that will blow away fans familiar with the series, it still delivers a top-of-the-line experience that is hard to match. While it would have been nice to see EA take some bigger risks, the end result is still of the series' typical high quality. « *Greg Ford*

FIRST DOWNS A couple tweaks improve the core gameplay; NFL superstar mode is an entertaining alternative to franchise mode
STOPPED SHORT QB vision control seems unnecessary

Pub. EA Sports **Dev.** Tiburon **ESRB** N/A **MSRP** $49.99

RATING [●●●●◐]



MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM: GUNDAM VS. ZETA GUNDAM
ONE LAST HURRAH FOR OLD-SCHOOL PILOTS

If you're not a hardcore fan of *Gundam*, a lot of what's cool about this game will go right over your head: the way it uses the original, melodramatic score from the TV series and how the Universal Century story mode lets you rewrite series history, allowing you to win battles that were lost and save characters that died in battle.

That's not to say *Gundam vs. Zeta Gundam* is without its charms for the casual gamer. The controls are simple and responsive, leading to an almost *Smash Bros.* feel. It's easy to jump in, and you'll be able to tackle all comers once you grasp the basics. This is also good for convincing anime-phobic gamer pals who don't know a Gundam from an Evangelion to play.

Depth is added by the wide selection of mechs, which cover seven real-world years of *Gundam* continuity. But since they control the same, it's up to the levels to provide most of the strategy. Sadly, the creaky technological underpinnings and arcade brevity on offer here can't quite allow for much complexity, and thus, strategy.

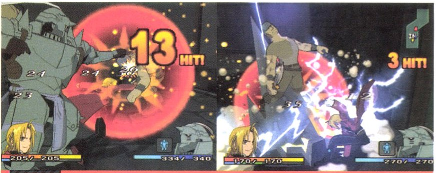
Graphics are dull and simple, reducing classic '80s designs to rusty metal. You know the drill with anime games: They're typically a bit half-assed, and with *Gundam vs. Zeta Gundam* too much effort was spent on fanboy frills and not enough was spent under the hood. It's a fun ride, but this series is showing its age. « *Christian Nutt*

VERDICT Simple and fun to play, but the charm wears thin after a while.

Pub. Bandai **Dev.** Capcom **ESRB** T **MSRP** $39.99

RATING [●●●○○]

Gundam isn't exactly a household name in the United States, but in Japan it's still huge. This game is based on two different *Gundam* series: the original *Mobile Suit Gundam*, which hit Japanese TV in 1979, and *Zeta Gundam*, which debuted in 1985.



FULLMETAL ALCHEMIST 2: CURSE OF THE CRIMSON ELIXIR
TURNING LEAD INTO EVEN SHINIER COPPER

About seven months ago, I wrote this about the previous *Fullmetal Alchemist* game: "At first it resembles another crappy game where you do a lot of jumping and hitting, except it's filled with smiling anime kids. But then the game introduces alchemy: a magic system that not only allows special attacks, but transforms normal objects into gameplay ones.... Alas, as neat as alchemy is, the rest of the game ends up being fairly by-the-numbers."

This new *Fullmetal Alchemist* is an improvement over the first game, but an incremental one. The graphics are cel-shaded and look nigh identical to the anime. It also has better humor, more transmutations (including the ability to make melee weapons out of thin air), more combat combos, and improved integration with the show. Those who watch the series will notice that the game touches upon the early episodes (featuring the other state alchemists, the serial killer Scar, and the story about Father Cornello from the first episode) before diving into an interesting side story about alchemy and golems. The rest of the game has a number of problems, such as the inability to directly control Edward, and the linearity. At this rate, *Fullmetal Alchemist 7* will feel like a proper *Fullmetal Alchemist 2*. « *Thierry Nguyen*

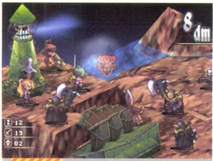
MORE GOLD Great use of cel shading, more alchemy uses, better story

MORE LEAD Still short, still easy

Pub. Square Enix **Dev.** Racjin **ESRB** T **MSRP** $39.99

RATING [●●●○○]

There's a full-fledged *Fullmetal Alchemist* movie coming out soon (in Japan at least), which happens to have the craziest plot twist yet (we won't spoil it for you anime fans!).



MAKAI KINGDOM
DISGAEA GETS A BIG BROTHER

From zero to hero: That's Nippon Ichi for you. Last generation, the company's *Rhapsody: A Musical Adventure* inspired more snickers than acclaim. On the PS2, though, you can't turn around without bumping into one of its strategy-RPGs, with 2003's horror- and humor-tinged *Disgaea* at the pinnacle of the genre's popularity on the PS2.

Maybe that explains the company's return to the dark netherworlds and unhinged comedy of *Disgaea*. The formula once again works beautifully—the story is very different from that of most RPGs and pokes fun at the genre itself, starring an egomaniacal demonic overlord and his group of not-quite-sane mythical pals.

The game will also inspire some déjà vu, particularly in those gamers who played *Phantom Brave*. And that's not really much of a surprise: When a company crafts a game a year, those things are bound to happen. Nippon Ichi falls into this pattern, cramming crazy new features and twists, based on the same basic gameplay, into every edition. But the whole exercise gets to feel more than a little redundant.

The developer's highly abstracted gameplay has drawn in a cadre of extremely hardcore fans, and it's not hard to understand why. What *Makai Kingdom* lacks in visceral appeal it more than makes up for in complexity and nuance. It's fun in a brain-taxing kind of way, but in the end a bit too cold and piecemeal to love. Though it may be fun and challenging, it never quite hangs together as a compelling whole. It's time for Nippon Ichi to give some thought to innovating—and making a game that's easier to connect to. « *Christian Nutt*

VERDICT Another engrossing, if not entirely cohesive, strategy-RPG from the reigning rulers of the form.

Pub. NIS America **Dev.** Nippon Ichi **ESRB** T **MSRP** $49.99

RATING [●●●◐○]

Though the original Japanese title of this game is *Phantom Kingdom*, the company changed the name to feature the Japanese word *makai*, which means "spirit world," for the English release. *Phantom Brave*, last year's Nippon Ichi strategy-RPG, is not actually related to this game storywise, which might explain the thinking behind the change.

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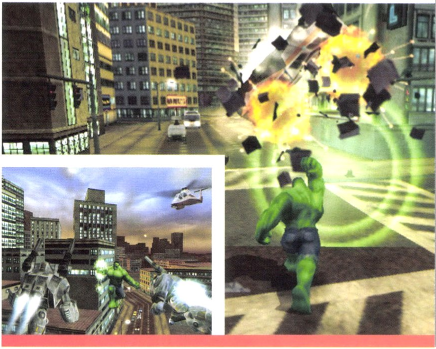
THE INCREDIBLE HULK: ULTIMATE DESTRUCTION

JUST ABOUT THE GREATEST SUPERHERO GAME EVER MADE



When I played the first level of *God of War*, I thought it was too intense, so much so that I felt like the game was starting on level 10. Playing *Ultimate Destruction* had the opposite effect; I wish it started in a later level, say about a third of the way in. Because it's in the later missions that the intensity jacks way up and never looks back. It's not that the earlier levels are dull—they aren't—but they're all about buildup, and so they don't pack the punch you get later on.

But don't be fooled. *Ultimate Destruction* is a challenging, engrossing, and at times pleasingly tough action experience. Most impressive is the Hulk himself. He acts how you'd expect him to act: like two tons of raw, raging, gamma-generated power, causing all sorts of mayhem as he is hunted and hated, Frankenstein style, by various nemeses (Thunderbolt Ross, the U.S. Army, Mercy, and the Abomination, to name a few). The Hulk character design is, in my mind as a Hulk fan from way back, as accurate as can be on a PS2, and the control set is tight and intuitive. The number of unlockable combos is more than generous, at times even awe-inspiring. Watching the result of a well-executed tank throw, for instance, is simply a moment of triumph.

Drawing heavily from the *Hulk* comics (not the 2003 movie fiasco), the plot involves Doc Samson helping Bruce Banner to defeat the demonic Devil Hulk that haunts Banner's subconscious. While the story screens are lackluster and the mediocre cut-scenes throw CG back to the 1990s, it's really the gameplay that will grab you. The free-roaming Hulk runs, jumps, wall-runs, and smashes through two huge landscapes: a large city and a desert. The story mode guides you through each area, though you'll have just as much fun goofing around and causing general mayhem, *GTA* style. Developer Radical did a terrific job of keeping the game interesting.

Hulk is easily one of the best superhero games, mainly because it feels like Radical took the subject seriously, rather than treating the game like just another licensed title. Here's hoping there's more Hulk in our future. « *Tom Byron*

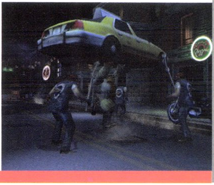
VERDICT Simply smashing.

Pub. Vivendi Universal Games **Dev.** Radical **ESRB** T **MSRP** $49.99

RATING [●●●●◐]

FANTASTIC 4

MORE LIKE THE PRETTY GOOD 4



Like the movie upon which it's based, *Fantastic 4* is light but entertaining summer fare. It's not going to win any awards, and it's ultimately not meant to be taken seriously, but it will leave you with an "OK, that was fun" feeling—and sometimes that's enough.

Fantastic 4 escapes the just-another-movie-game label by combining the comic-book and movie worlds. The comic-book levels are at best random; what, for instance, do the Mole Man or Puppet Master have to do with the movie's plot, which is strictly about the FF and Doctor Doom? Absolutely nothing, but so what? In the end, it makes for a deeper and more compelling game.

Gameplay is solid and convincing, and for the most part, the characters act like you think they should. While I found Johnny Storm to be most effective, there's an overall balance between the four, and each has an upgrade path that makes sense. The character design and voices are from the movie, and along with the story and dialogue, it's clear that someone with an appreciation for the *FF* comics was behind them. In fact, the story and dialogue are so comic-bookishly pulpy that I wondered if the FF's creator, Stan Lee, had a hand in the writing (he didn't).

At various times, you'll play the FF individually, in twos, or as the team they are meant to be. In team missions, you can switch characters on the fly and also execute some interesting combos with one of the other characters. Multiplayer modes come in the form of two-player co-op and arena battles and are pretty much the single-player experience—except with two players.

Fantastic 4 is short. Most players will finish it in less than six hours—and judging by the fact that finishing levels within certain time limits is among the mission bonuses, Activision doesn't expect anyone to take too long to play it.

Fair enough. I'll take fun, balance, and *FF* authenticity over length of gameplay any day. If you don't expect any more than this, you'll be fine. « *Tom Byron*

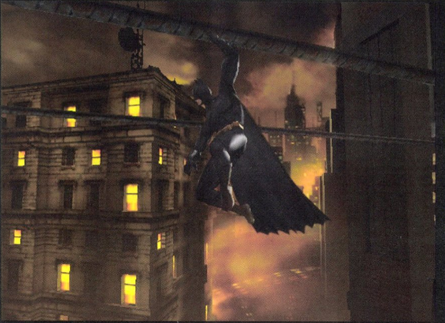
VERDICT Light summer fare but better than the average movie-based game.

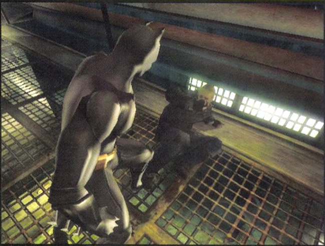
Pub. Activision **Dev.** 7 Studios **ESRB** T **MSRP** $49.99

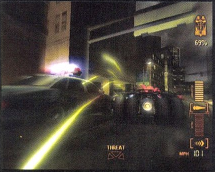
RATING [●●●◐○]

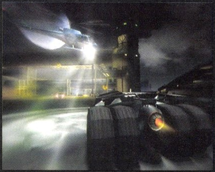
BATMAN BEGINS

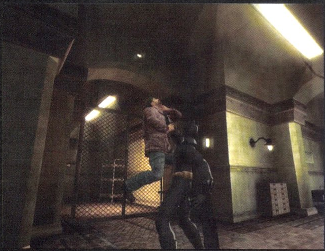
KNIGHTFALL











In a recent *USA Today* interview, Adam West commented that he loved the new *Batman Begins* film because it "wasn't the nonsense that our Gotham City was, where we could be buried by a giant ice cream cone." Just as *Batman Begins* the movie helped finalize Batman's transformation from comic camp to dark noir, *Batman Begins* the game tries to transform the Batman franchise from mediocre brawling games into *Splinter Cell* with tights. Unfortunately, just as his very first foray into crime fighting in *Batman: Year One* resulted in Batman receiving a humiliating beatdown from a prostitute, so does this very first try at a serious stealth game end up being crippled by humiliating simplicity.

The concept for the game sounds fantastic in principle. Using fear and shadows, Batman slinks around the periphery, stalks his prey, frightens his foes to weaken them, and then swoops in for a bout of short, brutal violence. Thanks to EA's fantastic production values, it's quite exhilarating to first see—and play—Batman, creeping around, scaring the bejesus out of enemies, and then laying into the baddies with a series of well-animated moves and slick gadgets. The use of light, shadow, sound, fire, vista, and cutscenes is impressive. Soon after this, the player goes through a training level as Bruce in the Himalayas and is then introduced to *Batman Begins*' greatest foe: context-sensitive actions.

Every object that you can possibly interact with is highlighted with an icon, and most of the time that interaction is key to the current situation. This icon shows up on doors you can open, things you can knock down, and items you can grapple on to; note that the icon appears only on items with which you can do one predetermined action. Want to grapple on to the steel beams above or punch a pile of garbage? Only if the game lets you. Ultimately, this ends up feeling like either a portrayal of Batman's hyperobservant mind, which allows him to instantly see the solution to any problem, or, even more so, like the developer is giving mainstream gamers a big fat "I win!" button for every puzzle. This cripples Batman more than anything else to date (yes, even more than when he got his back snapped in the comics), as it turns a serious stealth game into an easy task of "spot the button and press R1."

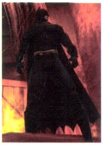
While details like the appearance of the movie's actors in their same roles (the tutorial is standard fare, except it happens to be delivered by Liam Neeson, of all people!), the *Burnout 3*–inspired Batmobile sequences, the quirky minigames, and the moments of sneaking and combat make the game fun to play, its linearity keeps it grounded to the "average licensed property" area. There are two more movies slated, so it's still possible that someday Batman's games will be as great as he himself is. « *Thierry Nguyen*

NOLAN Feels the way Batman should feel, with awesome graphics and Batmobile sequences

SCHUMACHER So newbie-friendly that it uses icons to tell the player exactly what to do in every situation

Pub. EA Games/Warner Bros. Interactive Ent. **Dev.** Eurocom **ESRB** T **MSRP** $39.99

RATING [●●●○○]



Despite his current, and vehement, antigun attitude, Batman actually used a pistol back in his early days (we're talking the '40s here) and occasionally clipped bad dudes. But then the suits at his publisher (called National Comics back then) decided to make him less violent and instituted the no-gun policy.

RESCUE THE LEMURS!

MADAGASCAR

WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE

It's easy to make assumptions about games based on animated children's films, and in the case of *Madagascar*, those assumptions would be absolutely correct: *Madagascar* provides unchallenging gameplay divided into easily digestible chunks that are driven along by a diluted story line that roughly follows the film's plot.

The levels let you play as the movie's major characters, all of which handle decently, though some (the penguins) are more fun than others (Gloria the hippo). The gameplay is pretty much a series of minigames strung together. You'll collect items, race, maneuver around obstacles, target shoot, and fight enemies who get in your way. It's all pretty decent, but some of the levels drag on for way too long to still be fun. The currency you collect along the way can be used at the zoovenir shop, but the only things really worth buying are three minigames. None is terribly compelling, but kids will enjoy them fine.

Overall, the mechanics are OK, though the camera is kind of unwieldy. But very frankly, that probably won't matter all that much to the target audience. If your kids loved the movie, they'll get some enjoyment out of the game, and no one else need bother. « *Dana Jongewaard*

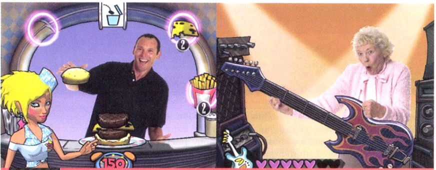
VERDICT Another average piece of marketing wearing an entertainment costume.

Pub. Activision **Dev.** Toys for Bob **ESRB** E10+ **MSRP** $39.99

RATING [●●●○○]

CELEBRITY-FREE ZONE

No A-list (or even B- or C-list) names in *Madagascar*—instead of using the stars' voices from the movie, you get unfamous soundalikes. Also missing are movie clips as cut-scenes.



EYETOY: PLAY 2

PRETTY MUCH THE ULTIMATE PARTY GAME

Play 2, while not exactly a quantum leap above the original *Play*, does offer a great deal more bang for your buck. Most notable is the increased depth and variety in each of the 12 games. BubblePop, for example, takes the window-washing game of *Play* and turns it into a challenging and addictive arcade experience in which you need to pop a screen full of clear bubbles while avoiding red bubbles placed in hard-to-avoid patterns. The music-oriented games are most improved here—especially the awesome AirGuitar, which works like *Guitar Freaks* but without any peripheral.

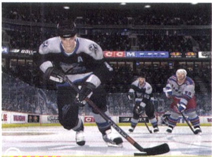
The best thing about *Play 2* is the fact that almost all 12 games are actually collections of three or more games; as you play, you'll go through a number of different stages with sometimes very different goals and play styles. All this is intercut with a number of other minigames and boss challenges. And this doesn't even include the wide variety of multiplayer variants.

Of all the games, the only real stinker is GoalAttack, which seems just a bit too quick to be controlled well with EyeToy. It's also a bit of a disappointment that the PlayRoom is a little less cutting-edge than in the last game. That aside, though, it's a hell of a lot of fun. « *Joe Rybicki*

VERDICT More variety and depth than *Play*.

Pub. Sony CEA **Dev.** Sony CEE **ESRB** E **MSRP** $49.99

RATING [●●●●◐]



NHL 06

INSERT JOKE ABOUT PLAYERS' STRIKE HERE

2K Games has pretty much left EA sucking snow regarding the yearly NHL games. *NHL 06*, however, feels like the first significant step the publishing behemoth has taken toward returning the once-great franchise to its former glory. It ain't perfect, but it's a start.

Almost everything has received some sort of overhaul. The dynasty mode in particular feels a lot better, since it includes very specific goals for each team (finish at the top of your conference in the first season, get to a certain round in the playoffs, etc.). This extends to your choice of an avatar for your general manager, as choosing specific ones will give you bonuses in various attributes that will help you build your team to the owner's expectations. It's far more rewarding than the option to set the hot dog prices found in previous games.

But this is all just window dressing for the actual on-ice gameplay. While the action remains largely the same, little tweaks are what matter—things like how hard it is to protect the puck if you streak down the ice holding the Turbo button the whole way and the way the puck actually bounces off the goalie when he makes a save add to the overall realism.

Unfortunately, a lot of the old problems still linger. Player models just aren't up to the standard set by *ESPN NHL 2K5*, and neither are the animations. There just aren't enough of them. Momentum still doesn't feel as important as it should, either. It's still possible to lay a guy out with a massive hip check from a standing start just by jabbing the Check button when you're anywhere near your opponent. The players can't turn on a dime at top speed anymore, thankfully, but the developers simply haven't gone far enough with the momentum tweaking.

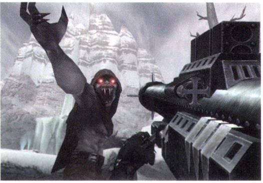
It's nice to see EA's NHL franchise starting to turn a corner, but it still has a ways to go before besting 2K Sports' stellar efforts. « *Greg Sewart*

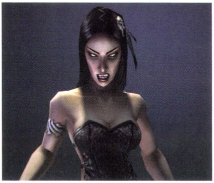
VERDICT Although a step in the right direction, this series still has a long way to go.

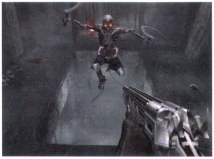
Pub. EA Sports **Dev.** EA Canada **ESRB** RP **MSRP** $39.99

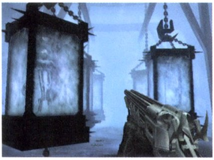
RATING [●●●○○]

Need a reminder of how great the *NHL* series once was? No problem. *NHL 06* includes a full version of the old *NHL '93* game from the 16-bit era, back when EA was just beginning to take over the world.









DARKWATCH

EVERYDAY VAMPIRES

The premise behind *Darkwatch* seems ridiculous at first—the melding of cowboys and vampires sounds like something a 7-year-old child would come up with. And indeed, the story of how a cowboy named Jericho becomes a vampire—and then joins an elite group of hunters named the Darkwatch—is almost completely uninteresting due to the way the game seems to just gloss over everything. As you progress through the assortment of mines and abandoned towns, you'll keep asking questions like "Who cares?" and "Why am I doing this?"

Fortunately for *Darkwatch*, these questions are superseded by the fact that the game doesn't entirely suck. In fact, *Darkwatch* is about as average as first-person shooters come, which isn't necessarily a bad thing, but it just doesn't do anything special to bring itself over the hump. Part of the problem is that so many aspects of *Darkwatch* will remind you of other first-person shooters that have these same features and execute them better, such as the vehicles, the weapons, and the choices to be good or bad. Additionally, the features that are unique to *Darkwatch*'s premise—namely the vampire powers—are incredibly similar to the regular power-ups you'd find in other first-person shooters. Few of these powers, aside from having crazy vampiric names, do anything to suggest that you're even a vampire, let alone a vampire that happens to also be a cowboy. Yes, it's great that you have a power that lets you kill most enemies in one shot, but so what? What does that have to do with being a vampire? One of the few outright vampirelike, and useful, powers is alternate sight, which basically bathes items and enemies in a white aura to put them in stark contrast to the blood red color that you see when looking through Jericho's crazy-looking eyeball.

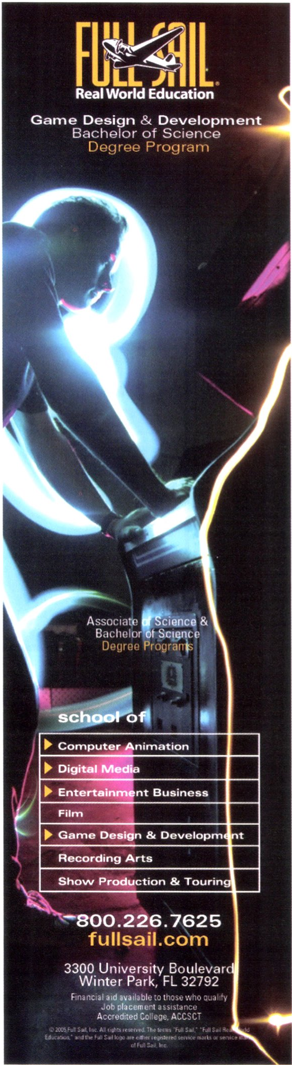
The actual shooter part of this FPS is also pretty average. Jericho can carry two weapons at once, and he can use either of them as a melee weapon when enemies get too close. You have a pretty standard arsenal as well: pistols, shotguns, crossbows, rifles, and rocket launchers (what would the Old West be without rocket launchers?). He also has a lean move that lets him peer out from behind walls, but it's pretty worthless since *Darkwatch*'s enemies aren't exactly the most intelligent creatures. Occasionally, they do an excellent job of finding cover, and they generally get out of the line of fire, but almost every single one of them is easily defeated with a little bit of circle-strafing and somewhat proficient aiming.

The levels aren't anything special either, but at least they flow properly. You encounter a lot of mines and similarly Old West–style locations, and while there are a few cool-looking areas, there's certainly a repetitive feel to some of them. The multiplayer maps are designed a little better thanks to their relatively small size. Also, many of the single-player maps are a little more interesting when playing co-op, but regardless of the mode you're using, *Darkwatch* doesn't amount to much more than your run-of-the-mill first-person shooter. « *Giancarlo Varanini*

PROS Standard first-person shooter gameplay, cooperative mode
CONS Standard first-person shooter gameplay

Pub. Capcom **Dev.** High Moon Studios **ESRB** M **MSRP** $49.99

RATING [●●●○○]



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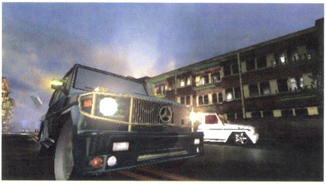
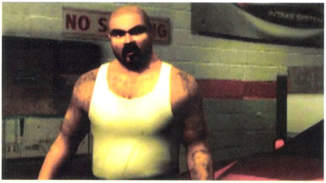
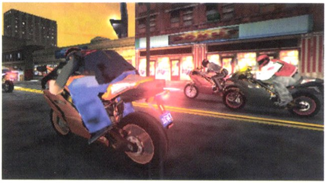
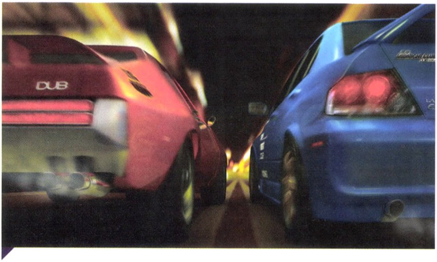
MIDNIGHT CLUB 3: DUB EDITION

LOAD TIMES REAL BIG









If you had any doubts as to the power of Sony's portable hardware, you needn't look any further than *Midnight Club 3*. On a sheer technical level, it's really an amazing game because not only has the gameplay from the PS2 version been kept intact, but the graphics have also seamlessly made the jump to the handheld game. Of course, a few concessions had to be made to squeeze all that detail onto the PSP—the framerate isn't quite as brisk, and damage modeling got tossed out the window, but considering that these massive cities (complete with traffic and all sorts of zany special effects) are even made possible on the PSP is a testament to the hardware.

And it's still impressive despite the exceedingly long load times between races. In some cases, loading can take well over a minute—so long that the PSP screen actually goes into power-save mode (when the screen dims to conserve battery life). For a portable game, and one that thrives on fast-paced racing, this is a pretty big problem because it totally disrupts the flow of an otherwise entertaining single- and multiplayer experience. You spend a few minutes (sometimes even just a dozen or so seconds) in a race, weaving in and out of traffic at breakneck speeds and knocking opponents into walls, and after you have that white-knuckle finish, you're greeted with a loading screen. Plus, there's the whole issue of battery life—*Midnight Club 3* zaps your PSP's power faster than almost any other game.

Technical issues aside, however, *Midnight Club 3* is a great racing game, and while it would've been nice to get more than just a port, there's something about the game that just makes it click with the PSP, possibly even more so than the PS2 version does with that hardware. The controls are incredibly sharp, and the way that they balance out depending on the vehicle you're using is especially noteworthy—bigger cars actually feel like behemoths whereas smaller tuners and motorcycles feel a bit more agile. And maybe it's just the PSP screen or the sharper color contrast, but finding your way through a city involves less trial and error because it's simply easier to see where you're going. Yes, there's the possibility that having played through the PS2 version has contributed to this feeling, but the likelihood of remembering every single sharp turn in each of the three cities is slim.

At any rate, it's actually a joy to drive, and it's even more fun to head back to the garage and customize every aspect of your vehicle. Customization isn't quite as big a deal in the PSP game, simply because you won't get the same kind of audience to look at your car as you would in the PS2 version, and let's be honest, part of the fun of customization is being able to show your results off to as many people as possible.

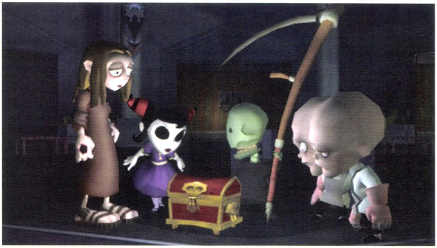
The PSP version of *Midnight Club 3* is a paradox in game form. It's both a technical marvel and a technical disaster. It's a great game, but it's also just a port. You're going to have to decide which of these aspects is most important to you, but one thing is certain: *Midnight Club 3* absolutely wipes the floor with other street racing games currently available for the PSP in both multiplayer and single-player options. « *Giancarlo Varanini*

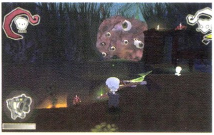
PROS Amazing detail, great racing mechanics and customization
CONS Load times are horrible, especially in multiplayer
Pub. Rockstar **Dev.** Rockstar **ESRB** E10+ **MSRP** $49.99

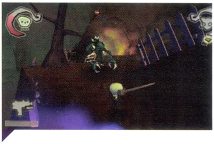
RATING [●●●●○]

DEATH, JR.

NOT-SO-GREAT EXPECTATIONS







If I could impart to the youngsters a sliver of my 26-year-old wisdom, it would be this: Don't get too excited. That girl you're desperate to talk to? She's totally insane. Your "awesome" new job? Ten times worse than the old "crappy" one. Sequel to your favorite movie? It's gonna suck. Fortify yourself against life's never-ending parade of disappointments. Expect the worst.

And so it is with *Death, Jr.*, a game with an unhealthy amount of hope attached to it. One of the few PSP games scheduled for release during the summer UMD drought, *Death, Jr.* is doubly rare: It's a PSP game that's not just a miniaturized version of something you played last year. DJ, the Grim Reaper's son, and his supporting cast of grade-school monsters and freaks are all-new characters. And with a touch of Tim Burton–inspired cartoon Gothic style, they promise a charming oddity of a game. Don't believe them.

Death, Jr. establishes its monotonous rhythm quickly. Armed with a truckload of guns and his scythe, DJ trudges through boxy, forgettable levels, blasting horde after horde of B-movie monsters. The gunplay is simplistic, relying almost entirely on an automatic lock-on button. You play cameraman more than gunslinger, constantly fighting to center your view on the enemy. Since you can lock on to only what you see onscreen, controlling the camera is *Death, Jr.*'s real challenge. I watched DJ take a beating at every possible angle but the one I needed.

Then there's the matter of source material. *Psychonauts* is a great game to emulate, but some of *Death, Jr.*'s levels seem like outright rip-offs. The asylum looks just like...the asylum. Meat World shares its strange beef fixation with Meat Circus, the final level of *Psychonauts*. And while the inner worlds of Tim Schafer's game hold a wealth of important character detail, *Death, Jr.* uses them as meaningless window dressing.

Oh well...we should have expected as much. « *Robert Ashley*

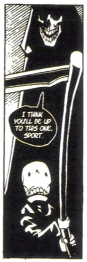
VERDICT A monotonous shooter with a crippled camera and a crush on *Psychonauts*.

Pub. Konami **Dev.** Backbone Ent. **ESRB** T **MSRP** $39.99

RATING [●●◐○○]

NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH

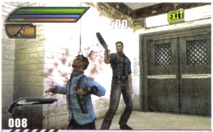
Dead to Rights, the novel by J.A. Jance. Instead of a cop named Jack Slate and sidekick dog Shadow, it features a widowed Arizona sheriff named Joanna Brady who's investigating the arson-related death of a veterinarian named Amos Buckwalter.



I THINK YOU'LL BE UP TO THIS ONE, SPORT.

MULTIMEDIA MADNESS

If *Death, Jr.* the game isn't your cup of tea, perhaps you'd rather try out another medium instead: The comic book, done by Gary Whitta and Ted Naifeh, was showcased at ComicCon in San Diego this past July.



DEAD TO RIGHTS: RECKONING

MAX PAYNE, THIS IS NOT

***Dead to Rights* has** its heart in the right place—there's something undeniably fun about an all-out firefight against a group of thugs, and it's even more fun when you have the ability to leap into the air in slow motion and take out multiple enemies in one swoop. But unfortunately, there are just too many fundamental problems with *Dead to Rights: Reckoning* that detract from what would otherwise be an incredibly visceral experience.

The controls and aiming mechanics are the biggest culprits. Generally, just running around isn't all that tough, but when you have to navigate through a maze of crates, boxes, and conveniently placed oil drums, it becomes an issue because the controls just aren't sharp enough. It's almost like you're ice-skating amidst a hail of bullets, which is also a problem because it can be incredibly difficult to find adequate cover. On top of all that, the lock-on system is terrible. If there's a single enemy in the room, then you'll have no problems, but if there are multiple foes, then good luck targeting a specific enemy on your first try. And you will have to target specific enemies in the later levels if you want to survive, particularly foes with more powerful weapons, otherwise you'll be dead in seconds.

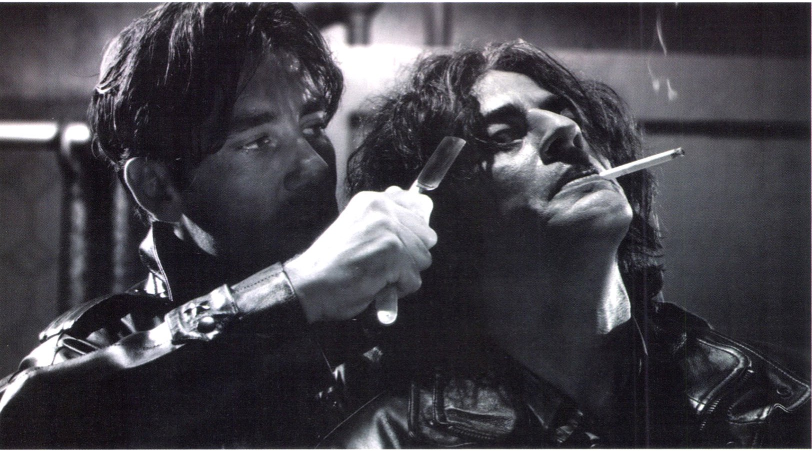
Then there's the camera. It takes a little while for the camera to reset behind you, especially if you've just turned a tight corner or if you're trying to target an enemy that's offscreen. Also, the camera often doesn't automatically shift if you're targeting. Basically, it's not fast enough to keep up with the action.

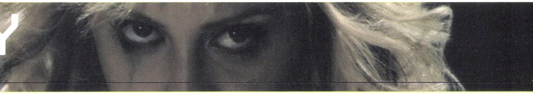
Fans of previous *Dead to Rights* games will find that the core action of what made those games popular is still intact, but they'll have to put up with a few annoying problems to get any enjoyment. And while multiplayer is a nice feature, its novelty wears thin quickly since part of the fun is being in a hectic firefight with several enemies and not just a couple of people. « *Giancarlo Varanini*

PROS Fun action that...
CONS ...gets almost completely overwhelmed by a shoddy camera and controls

Pub. Namco **Dev.** Rebellion **ESRB** M **MSRP** $39.99

RATING [●●◐○○]





SIN CITY

(Bruce Willis, Jessica Alba)

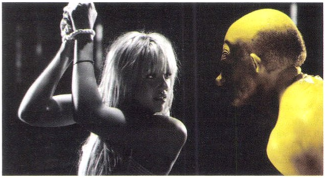
GRITTY IS PRETTY by John Scalzi

Sin City isn't just an adaptation of cartoon master Frank Miller's gritty, grimy graphic novel—it is the graphic novel, only barely budged into moving form. Director Robert Rodriguez so slavishly reproduced Miller's static image framing choice that he actually insisted that Miller take a codirecting credit on the film, and when the Directors Guild of America told Rodriguez he couldn't do that, he told to DGA to take a hike, resigned from the guild, and did it anyway.

He was right to do it. Miller turns out to be absolutely critical to this film, both as a writer and as a visual stylist. Notwithstanding Ang Lee's overplayed comic-book frames in *Hulk*, no film has ever managed to carry over the feel of a graphic novel as completely as this film does or made it act in the service of the film medium as effectively. As a result, Rodriguez has expanded the grammar and vocabulary of film, which, 110 years on in the medium, takes some doing.

As an extra bonus, the film itself is really good—noir so hard-boiled that it would crack the sidewalk if dropped, chopped up into several stories, each with its own deeply disturbing moments. The film is packed with stars who are as visually interesting (for their various reasons) as the film itself: Bruce Willis, Mickey Rourke, Jessica Alba, Rosario Dawson, Benicio Del Toro, Clive Owen, each of whom also gets interesting character grace notes as well. Also, any film that can make doe-eyed Elijah Wood scary as hell deserves props. There may be better films in 2005 than this, but not many, and not any with this much style.

RATING [●●●●●◗]

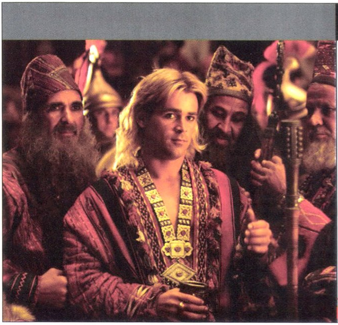


BEAUTY SHOP

(Queen Latifah, Alicia Silverstone)

There is some measure of justice in this world that a big woman like Queen Latifah gets to be a star—and gets to be more than a little sexy (yeah, I think Queen Latifah is sexy. Wanna fight about it?). *Beauty Shop* shows why: She's got presence up the wazoo as she stands front and center in this modest *Barbershop* knockoff and makes it work through sheer force of will. There are other stars in the film, but they all bow to the Queen. Mmm.

RATING [○○○◐●]



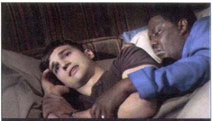
ALEXANDER

(Colin Farrell, Angelina Jolie)

Here's an interesting movie statistic about *Alexander*: It was a big, fat flop here in the United States, where the $155 million movie made just $35 million in the theaters, but a moderate hit in the rest of the world, where it recouped the rest of its production costs and then some. Seems that the rest of the world is ready for an over-the-top spectacle about a bisexual world conqueror, while the U.S., eh, not so much.

Mind you, America may in fact be ready for a bisexual world conqueror biography, just not this one. When 29-year-old Angelina Jolie is playing the mother of 28-year-old Colin Farrell, who is sporting a blond shag stripped off a shih tzu, and everyone is camping it up under Stone's plummy direction, well, you don't need to be sexually uptight to give this one a pass.

RATING [○○●●●]



GUESS WHO

(Ashton Kutcher, Bernie Mac)

There's a certain sick genius to this film: An earnest remake of *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* here in 2005 would have fallen flat on its sanctimonious face, even with the stars' races switched as they are here. So a genial and harmless comedy was the way to go. Even so, having Ashton Kutcher step in for Sidney Poitier is like having a wobbly T-ball player penciled in to the Yankees' starting lineup. You admire his willingness, at the very least.

RATING [○○○◐●]

MONSTER-IN-LAW

(Jennifer Lopez, Jane Fonda)

Jane Fonda returns to the movies after 15 years to play a horrid harpy who flogs on soon-to-be-daughter-in-law Jennifer Lopez because that's what this film's lame script tells her to do. Note to Fonda: This was not worth coming out of retirement to do. Hell, it's not worth coming out of retirement even to see. Note to Lopez: If this is the sort of script you've got to work with these days, consider a 15-year hiatus from film. But be warned that it didn't work for Fonda.

RATING [○◐●●●]

DVD RELEASES

August 2

Alexander

Guess Who

August 9

Look at Me

August 16

Little Britain: Season 1

Sin City

August 23

Beauty Shop

Layer Cake

The Ring Two

August 30

Curb Your Enthusiasm: Season 4

Monster-in-Law

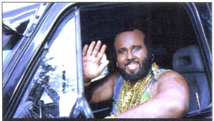
Sahara

THE RING TWO

(Naomi Watts, Simon Baker)

The original Japanese *The Ring* was directed by Hideo Nakata, who didn't direct the American remake but does direct the sequel—which is not the same story as the Japanese original's sequel, which was also directed by Nakata. I need a flow chart. As for this *Ring Two*, well, you know. More jumps, more squeals, more moody spookiness, more Naomi Watts pretending to be scared in damp surroundings. You know exactly what you're getting here.

RATING [○○○◐●]



LITTLE BRITAIN: SEASON 1

(Matt Lucas, David Walliams)

All you folk who are bereft now that the original U.K. version of *The Office* is no more can cheer yourselves up with this BBC sketch comedy show, which, while entirely unlike *The Office*, nevertheless provides the same sort of comedy fix. Which is to say a certain segment of humanity will find it unaccountably amusing and will quote it whenever possible while the rest of humanity stares and wonders what the hell the geeks are going on about now.

RATING [○○○○●]

SAHARA

(Matthew McConaughey, Penélope Cruz)

Matthew McConaughey is the Jimmy Buffett of movie stars, which is to say he just seems so laid back that no matter how fast he's going he looks like he's shuffling along the beach in flip-flops. *Sahara* has McConaughey doing a lot of ridiculous things in a lot of ridiculous ways—just about every action movie cliché is present and accounted for—but our hero just keeps on keeping on, looking for all the world like he's just waiting on his next frosty Corona.

RATING [○○○◐●]

UMD RELEASES

August 2

Ghost Busters

Guess Who

August 16

Sin City

August 23

Evil Dead

Layer Cake

Snatch

Total Recall

Young Guns

August 30

American Pie

The Bourne Identity

Sahara

LAYER CAKE

(Daniel Craig, Colm Meaney)

This smart and nasty little crime thriller has the advantage of starring Daniel Craig, who was bandied about as the next James Bond as this film debuted, thereby adding boost to the film's little indie box office. Personally, I don't give a rat's ass who the next Bond will be, but I do like Craig, who plays a smart midlevel criminal whose cautious plans get kicked to the curb when he's dragooned for a dangerous assignment. A must for crime-movie fans.

RATING [○○○○●]

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PS1

SONY'S LITTLE GRAY BOX TURNS 10

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